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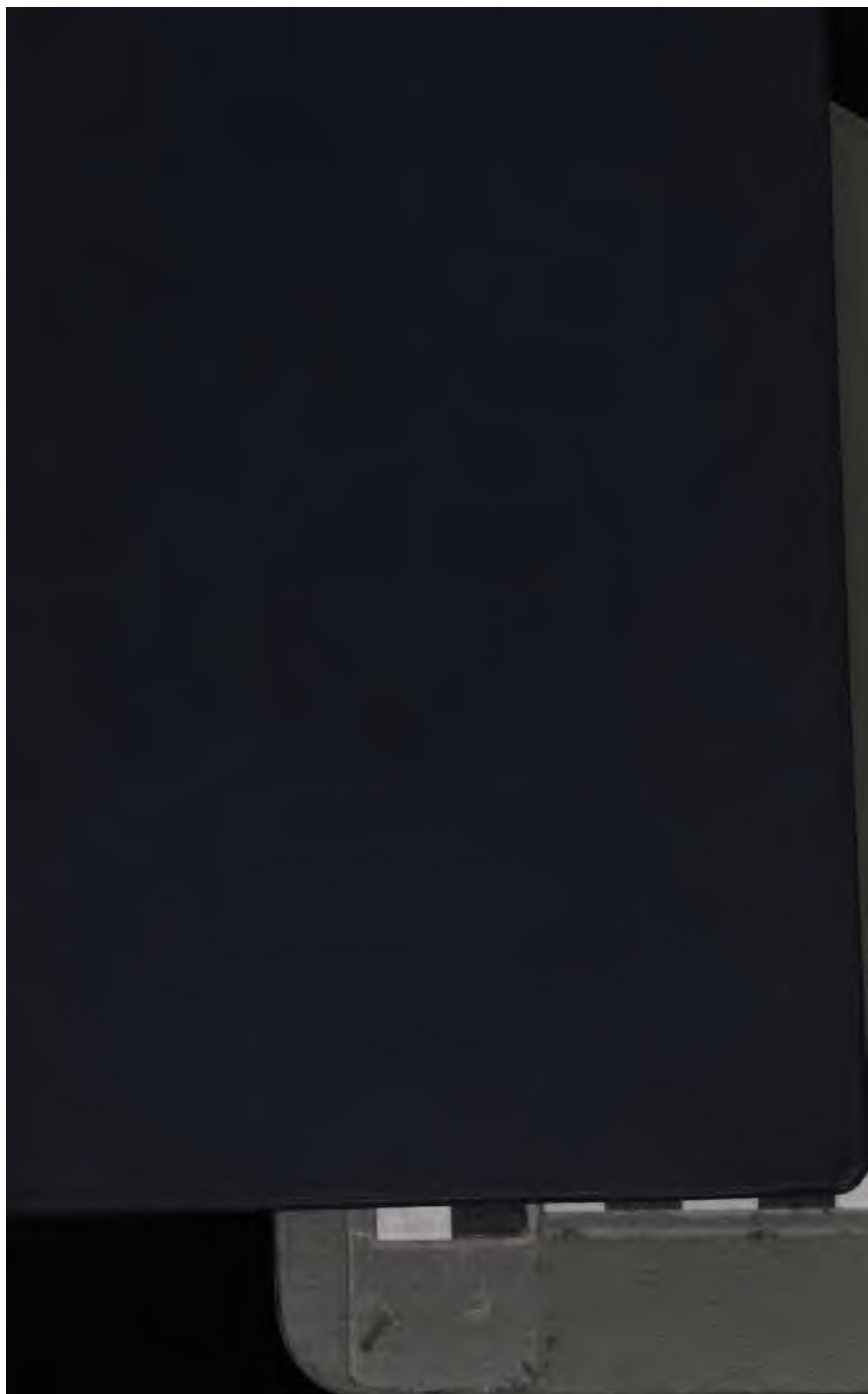
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"THERE HE SAW HIS GRANDFATHER SEATED BY THE FIRE WITH A
HANDKERCHIEF ROUND HIS NECK."

(Frontispiece.)

Page 63.





**"THERE HE SAW HIS GRANDFATHER SEATED BY THE FIRE WITH A
HANDKERCHIEF ROUND HIS NECK."**

(Frontispiece.)

Page 63.

THE RED WINDOW

BY

FERGUS HUME

AUTHOR OF

"THE MYSTERY OF A RANSOM CAB," "THE RAINBOW FEATHER,"
"A COIN OF EDWARD VII," "THE PAGAN'S CUP," "CLAUDE
DUVAL OF NINETY-FIVE," ETC., ETC.

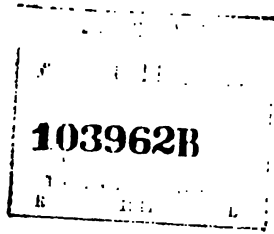
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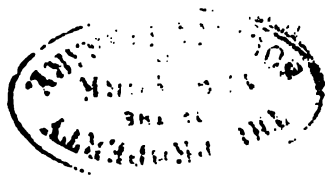
The Red Window

Issued May, 1904

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Comrades	9
II.	Sir Simon Gore	23
III.	The Will	38
IV.	A Strange Adventure	50
V.	Lost in the Darkness	64
VI.	A Maiden Gentlewoman	77
VII.	Bernard's Friends	90
VIII.	Bernard's Enemies	103
IX.	At Cove Castle	115
X.	A Statement of the Case	129
XI.	Mrs. Gilroy's Past	142
XII.	The New Page	155
XIII.	A Consultation	170
XIV.	Love in Exile	183
XV.	The Past of Alice	195
XVI.	The Unexpected	208
XVII.	The Diary	221
XVIII.	Tolomeo's Story	232
XIX.	Plots and Counterplots	245
XX.	A Confession	259
XXI.	Young Judas	276
XXII.	The Truth	291
XXIII.	A Year Later	309

End of contents



The Red Window

CHAPTER I

COMRADES

"Hullo, Gore!"

The young soldier stopped, started, colored with annoyance, and with a surprised expression turned to look on the other soldier who had addressed him. After a moment's scrutiny of the stranger's genial smile he extended his hand with pleased recognition. "Conniston," said he, "I thought you were in America."

"So I am; so don't call me Conniston at the pitch of your voice, old boy. His lordship of that name is camping on Californian slopes for a big game shoot. The warrior who stands before you is Dick West of the — Lancers, the old Come-to-the-Fronts. And what are you doing as an Imperial Yeoman, Gore?"

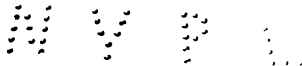
"Not that name," said the other, with an anxious glance around. "Like yourself, I don't want to be known."

"Oh! So you are sailing under false colors also?"

"Against my will, Conniston—I mean West. I am Corporal Bernard."

"Hum!" said Lord Conniston, with an approving nod. "You have kept your Christian name, I see."

"It is all that remains of my old life," replied Gore, *bitterly*. "*But your title, Conniston?*"



"Has disappeared," said the lancer, good-humoredly, "until I can make enough money to gild it."

"Do you hope to do that on a private's pay?"

West shrugged his shoulders. "I hope to fight my way during the war to a general's rank. With that and a V.C., an old castle and an older title, I may catch a dollar heiress by the time the Boers give in."

"You don't put in your good looks, Conniston," said Bernard, smiling.

"Dollar heiresses don't buy what's in the shop-windows, old man. But won't you explain your uniform and dismal looks?"

Gore laughed. "My dismal looks have passed away since we have met so opportunely," he said, looking across the grass. "Come and sit down. We have much to say to one another."

Conniston and Gore—they used the old names in preference to the new—walked across the grass to an isolated seat under a leafless elm. The two old friends had met near the magazine in Hyde Park, on the borders of the Serpentine, and the meeting was as unexpected as pleasant. It was a gray, damp October day, and the trees were raining yellow, brown and red leaves on the sodden ground. Yet a breath of summer lingered in the atmosphere, and there was a warmth in the air which had lured many people to the Park. Winter was coming fast, and the place, untidy with withered leaves, bare of flowers, and dismal under a sombre, windy sky, looked unattractive enough. But the two did not mind the dreary day. Summer—the summer of youth—was in their hearts, and, recalling their old school friendship, they smiled on one another *as they sat down*. In the distance a few children were

playing, their nursemaids comparing notes or chatting with friends or stray policemen, so there was no one near to overhear what they had to say. A number of fashionable carriages rolled along the road, and occasionally someone they knew would pass. But vehicles and people belonged to the old world out of which they had stepped into the new, and they sat like a couple of Peris at the gate of Paradise, but less discontented.

Both the young men were handsome in their several ways. The yeoman was tall, slender, dark and markedly quiet in his manner. His clear-cut face was clean-shaven; he had black hair, dark blue eyes, put in—as the Irish say—with a dirty finger, and his figure was admirably proportioned. In his khaki he looked a fine specimen of a man in his twenty-fifth year. But his expression was stern, even bitter, and there were thoughtful furrows on his forehead which should not have been there at his age. Conniston noted these, and concluded silently that the world had gone awry with his formerly sunny-faced friend. At Eton, Gore had always been happy and good-tempered.

Conniston himself formed a contrast to his companion. He was not tall, but slightly-built and wiry, alert in his manner and quick in his movements. As fair as Gore was dark, he wore a small light mustache, which he pulled restlessly when excited. In his smart, tight-fitting uniform he looked a natty jimp soldier, and his reduced position did not seem to affect his spirits. He smiled and joked and laughed and bubbled over with delight on seeing his school chum again. Gore was also delighted, but, being quieter, did not reveal *his pleasure so openly.*

When they were seated, the lancer produced an ornate silver case, far too extravagant for a private, and offered Gore a particularly excellent cigarette. "I have a confiding tobacconist," said Conniston, "who supplies me with the best, in the hope that I'll pay him some day. I can stand a lot, but bad tobacco is beyond my powers of endurance. I'm a self-indulgent beast, Gore!"

Gore lighted up. "How did your tobacconist know you?" he asked.

"Because a newly-grown mustache wasn't a sufficient disguise. I walked into the shop one day hoping he was out. But he chanced to be in, and immediately knew me. I made him promise to hold his tongue, and said I had volunteered for the war. He's a good chap, and never told a soul. Oh, my aunt!" chattered Conniston. "What would my noble relatives say if they saw me in this kit?"

"You are supposed to be in California?"

"That's so—shootin'. But I'm quartered at Canterbury, and only come up to town every now and again. Of course I take care to keep out of the fashionable world, so no one's spotted me yet."

"Your officers!"

"There's no one in the regiment I know. The Tommies take me for a gentleman who has gone wrong, and I keep to their society. Not that a private has much to do with the officers. They take little notice of me, and I've learned to say, 'Sir!' quite nicely," grinned Conniston.

"What on earth made you enlist?"

"I might put the same question to you, Bernard?"

"I'll tell you my story later. Out with yours, old boy."

"Just the same authoritative manner," said Conniston, shrugging. "I never did have a chap order me about as you do. If you weren't such a good chap you'd have been a bully with that domineering way you have. I wonder how you like knuckling under to orders?"

"He who cannot serve is not fit to command," quoted Gore, sententiously. "Go on with the story."

"It's not much of a story. I came in for the title three years ago, when I was rising twenty. But I inherited nothing else. My respected grandfather made away with nearly all the family estates, and my poor father parted with the rest. Upon my word," said the young lord, laughing, "with two such rascals as progenitors, it's wonderful I should be as good as I am. They drank and gambled and—"

"Don't, Conniston. After all your father is your father."

"*Was* my father, you mean. He's dead and buried in the family vault. I own that much property—all I have."

"Where is it?"

"At Cove Castle in the Essex Marshes!"

"I remember. You told me about it at school. Cove Castle is ten miles from Hurseton."

"And Hurseton is where your uncle, Sir Simon, lives."

Gore looked black. "Yes," he said shortly. "Go on!"

Conniston drew his own conclusions from the frown, and *rattled on in his usual cheerful manner*. "I came

Gore, who usually gave advice, found himself receiving it. The two seemed to have changed places. Dick noticed the look and slapped Gore on the back. "I've been seeing life since we parted at Eton, old boy," said he, "and it—the trouble of it, I mean—has hammered me into shape."

"It hasn't made you despondent, though."

"And it never will," said Conniston, emphatically, "until I meet with the woman who refuses to marry me. Then I'll howl."

"You haven't met the woman yet?"

"No. But you have. I can see it in the telltale blush. Bless me, old Gore, how boyish you are. I haven't blushed for years."

"You hardened sinner. Yes! There is a woman, and she is the cause of my trouble."

"The usual case," said the worldly-wise Richard. "Who is she?"

"Her name is Alice," said Gore, slowly, his eyes on the damp grass.

"A pretty unromantic, domestic name. 'Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?'"

"I'm always remembering her," said Gore, angrily. "Don't quote that song, Dick. I used to sing it to her. Poor Alice."

"What's her other name?"

"Malleeson—Alice Malleeson!"

"Great Scott!" said Conniston, his jaw falling. "The niece of Miss Berengaria Plantagenet?"

"Yes! Do you know—?" Here Gore broke off, annoyed with himself. "Of course. How could I forget? Miss Plantagenet is your aunt."

"My rich aunt, who could leave me five thousand a

year if she'd only die. But I daresay she'll leave it to Alice with the light-brown hair, and you'll marry her."

"Conniston, don't be an ass. If you know the story of Miss Malleson's life, you must know that there isn't the slightest chance of her inheriting the money."

"Ah, but, you see, Bernard, I don't know the story."

"You know Miss Plantagenet. She sometimes talks of you."

"How good of her, seeing that I've hardly been in her company for the last ten years. I remember going to "The Bower" when a small boy, and making myself ill with plums in a most delightful kitchen garden. I was scolded by a wonderful old lady as small as a fairy and rather like one in looks—a regular bad fairy."

"No! no. She is very kind."

"She wasn't to me," confessed Conniston; "but I daresay she will have more respect for me now that I'm the head of the family. Lord! to think of that old woman's money."

"Conniston, she would be angry if she knew you had enlisted. She is so proud of her birth and of her connection with the Wests. Why don't you call and tell her—"

"No, indeed. I'll do nothing of the sort. And don't you say a word either, Bernard. I'm going to carve out my own fortune. I don't want money seasoned with advice from that old cat."

"She is not an old cat!"

"She must be, for she wasn't a kitten when I saw her years ago. But about Miss Malleson. Who is she? I know she's Miss Plantagenet's niece. But who is she?"

"She is not the niece—only an adopted one. She

has been with Miss Plantagenet for the last nine years, and came from a French convent. Miss Plantagenet treats her like a niece, but it is an understood thing that Alice is to receive no money."

"That looks promising for me," said Conniston, pulling his mustache, "but my old aunt is so healthy that I'll be gray in the head before I get a cent. So you've fallen in love with Alice?"

"Yes," sighed Gore, drawing figures with his cane. "I love her dearly and she loves me. But my grandfather objects. I insisted upon marrying Alice, so he cut me off with a shilling. I expect the money will go to my cousin, Julius Beryl, and, like you, I'll have to content myself with a barren title."

"But why is Sir Simon so hard, Gore?"

Bernard frowned again. "Do you notice how dark I am?" he asked.

"Yes! You have rather an Italian look."

"That's clever of you, Dick. My mother was Italian, the daughter of a noble Florentine family; but in England was nothing but a poor governess. My father married her, and Sir Simon—*his* father—cut him off. Then when my parents died, my grandfather sent for me, and brought me up. We have never been good friends," sighed Bernard again, "and when I wanted to marry Alice there was a row. I fear I lost my temper. You know from my mother I inherit a fearful temper, nor do I think the Gores are the calmest of people. However, Sir Simon swore that he wouldn't have another *mésalliance* in the family and—"

"*Mésalliance?*"

"Yes! No one knows who Alice is, and Miss Plantagenet—who does know—won't tell."

“You said no one knew, and now you say Miss Plantagenet does,” said Conniston, laughing. “You’re getting mixed, Bernard. Well, so you and Sir Simon had a row?”

“A royal row. He ordered me out of the house. I fear I said things to him I should not have said, but my blood was boiling at the insults he heaped on Alice. And you know Sir Simon is a miser. My extravagance—though I really wasn’t very extravagant—might have done something to get his back up. However, the row came off, and I was turned away. I came to town, and could see nothing better to do than enlist, so I have been in the Yeomanry for the last four months, and have managed to reach the rank of corporal. I go out to the war soon.”

“We’ll go together,” said Conniston, brightening, “and then when you come back covered with glory, Sir Simon—”

“No. He won’t relent unless I give up Alice, and that I will not do. What does it matter if Alice is nameless? I love her, and that is enough for me!”

“And too much for your grandfather, evidently. But what about that cousin of yours, you used to talk of? Lucy something—”

“Lucy Randolph. Oh, she’s a dear little girl, and has been an angel. She is trying to soothe Sir Simon, and all through has stood my friend. I made her promise that she would put a lamp in the Red Window when Sir Simon relented—if he ever does relent.”

Conniston looked puzzled. “The Red Window?”

“Ah! You don’t know the legend of the Red Window. There is a window of that sort at the Hall, which was used during the Parliamentary wars to ad-

wise loyal cavaliers of danger. It commands a long prospect down the side avenue. The story is too long to tell you. But, you see, Conniston, I can't get near the house, and my only chance of knowing if Sir Simon is better disposed towards me is by looking from the outside of the park up to the Red Window. If this shows a red light I know that he is relenting; if not, he is still angry. I have been once or twice to the Hall," said Gore, shaking his head, "but no light has been shown."

"What a roundabout way of letting you know things. Can't Lucy write?"

Gore shook his head again. "No. You see, she is engaged to Julius, who hates me."

"Oh, that Beryl man. He comes in for the money?"

"Now that I'm chucked I suppose he will," said Bernard, gloomily; "and I don't want to get poor Lucy into his black books, as he isn't a nice sort of chap. He won't thank her if she tries to bias the old man in my favor. And then there's the housekeeper who doesn't like me—Mrs. Gilroy her name is. She and Julius will both keep Sir Simon's temper alive. I can't write to him, or my letter would be intercepted and destroyed by Mrs. Gilroy. Lucy can't write me because of Julius, so my only chance of knowing if the old man is thinking better of his determination is by watching for the red light. I shall go down again twice before I leave for Africa."

"And if you see the red light you won't stick to soldiering?"

"Yes, I will. But I'll then walk boldly up to the Hall and tell Sir Simon how sorry I am. But in any case I intend to fight for my country. Alice herself

wouldn't ask me to be a coward and leave. I go to the Cape with you, Conniston," said Bernard, rising.

"Good old chap," said Conniston, delighted, "you're the only fellow I'd care to chum up with. I have often thought of you since we parted. But you rarely wrote to me."

"You were the better correspondent, I admit," said Gore, as they walked across the bridge. "I am ashamed I did not continue our school friendship, as we always were such chums, but—"

"The inevitable woman. Ah, Delilah always comes between David and Jonathan."

"Don't call Alice by that name!" fired up Gore.

"Well, then, I won't. But don't get in a wax. What a fire-brand you are, Gore! Just as fierce as you were at school."

"Yes," said Bernard, quieting down. "I only hope my bad temper will not ruin me some day. I tell you, Conniston, when Sir Simon pitched into me I felt inclined to throw something at his head. He was most insulting. I didn't mind what he said about me, but when he began to slang Alice I told him I'd pitch him out of the window if he didn't stop. And I said many other foolish things."

"Shouldn't do that. He's an old man."

"I know—I know. I was a fool. But you have no idea how readily my temper gets the better of me. I could strangle anyone who said a word against my Alice."

"Well, don't strangle me," said Conniston, laughing. "I won't call her Delilah again, I promise you. But about your Red Window business—you needn't go down to the Hall for a week or so."

“Why not?”

“Because Sir Simon is in town.”

“Nonsense. He never comes to town.”

“He has this time. Queerly enough, his lawyers are mine. I saw him at the office and asked who he was. Durham, my lawyer friend, told me.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Three days. I came up on business, and was in plains!”

“Plains?”

“What! you a soldier and don’t know plain clothes are called so. You are an old ass, Bernard. But, I say, I’ve got digs of a sort hereabouts. Come and dine with me to-night.”

“But I haven’t any dress clothes. I got rid of them, thinking I was going to the Cape sooner.”

“Then come in khaki. You look A 1 in it. Here’s the address,” and Conniston hastily scribbled something on his card. “I shall expect you at seven.”

The two friends parted with a hearty handshake, and Gore walked away feeling happier than he had been. Conniston, gazing after him, felt a tug at his coat. He looked down, and saw a small boy. “Judas,” said Conniston, “you young brute! How did you know me?”

CHAPTER II

SIR SIMON GORE

Avarice, according to Byron, is a gentlemanly vice appertaining to old age. It certainly acted like Aaron's rod with Sir Simon, as it swallowed up all his more youthful sins. During the early part of the Victorian epoch, the old man had been a spendthrift and a rake. Now, he never looked agreeably upon a woman, and the prettier they were the more he frowned upon them. As he was close upon eighty, it was not to be wondered at that his blood ran thin and cold; still, he might have retained the courtesy for which he was famous in his hot youth. But he eschewed female society in the main, and was barely civil to his pretty, fascinating niece, who attended to him and bore with his ill-humors. Only Mrs. Gilroy succeeded in extorting civil words from him, but then Mrs. Gilroy was necessary to his comfort, being a capital nurse and as quiet as a cat about the house. Where his own pleasure was concerned Sir Simon could be artful.

Long ago he had given up luxury. He never put liquor to his withered lips, he ate only the plainest food, and surrounded himself with merely the bare necessities of life. All his aims were to gather money, to see it increase, to buy land, to screw the last penny out of unwilling tenants, and to pick up a farthing, in whatever mud it might be lying. He never helped the poor, he *grudged repairs* to the property, he kept Lucy on

short commons, and expressed such violent opinions concerning the rector's tithes that the poor man was afraid to come near him. As Sir Simon, like a godless old pagan, never went to church, the absence of the clerical element at the Hall troubled him little. He was a typical miser in looks, being bent, withered and dry. As a young man he had bought, in his spendthrift days, a great number of suits, and these he was wearing out in his old age. The garments, once fashionable, looked queer in the eyes of a younger generation; but Sir Simon minded no one. He was always scrupulously dressed in his antique garb, and looked, as the saying goes, as neat as a new pin. His health was tolerable, although he suffered from rheumatism and a constant cough. Owing to his total abstinence, he was free from gout, but could not have been worse tempered had he indeed suffered, as he assuredly deserved to. With his withered skin, his thin, high nose, his pinched features and his bent form he looked anything but agreeable. When walking he supported himself with an ebony cane, and had been known on occasions to use it on the backs of underlings. From this practice, however, he had desisted, since the underlings, forgetful of the feudal system, brought actions for assault, which resulted in Sir Simon losing money. As the old Baronet said, radical opinions were ruining the country; for why should the lower orders not submit to the stick?

It was rarely that this agreeable old gentleman came to town. He lived at the Hall in Essex in savage seclusion, and there ruled over a diminished household with a rod of iron. Mrs. Gilroy, who had been with him for many years, was—outwardly—as penurious as her *master*, so he trusted her as much as he trusted anyone.

What between the grim old man and the silent house-keeper, poor Lucy Randolph, who was only a connection, had a dreary time. But then, as the daughter of Sir Simon's niece, she was regarded as an interloper, and the old man grumbled at having to support poor relations. Bernard he had tolerated as his heir, Lucy he frankly disliked as a caterpillar. Often would he call her this name.

As usual, Sir Simon came to town with the least expense to himself, since it agonized him to spend a penny. But an old friend of his, more open-handed than the baronet, had lent him his town house. This was a small residence in a quiet Kensington square, by no means fashionable. The central gardens, surrounded by rusty iron railings, were devoid of flowers and filled with ragged elms and sycamores, suffered to grow amidst rank grass untrimmed and unattended. The roads around were green with weeds, and the houses appeared to be deserted. Indeed, many of them were, as few people cared to live in so dull a neighborhood; but others were occupied by elderly folk, who loved the quietness and retirement. Crimea square—its name hinted at its age—was a kind of backwater into which drifted human derelicts. A few yards away the main thoroughfare roared with life and pulsed with vitality, but the dwellers in the square lived as in the enchanted wood of the sleeping beauty.

No. 32 was the house occupied by Sir Simon, and it was distinguished from its neighbors by a coat of white paint. Its spurious, smart air was quite out of keeping with the neighborhood, and Sir Simon made ironical remarks when he saw its attempt at being up-to-date. But *the house was small, and, although furnished in a gim-*

crack way, was good enough for a month's residence. Moreover, since he paid no rent, this enhanced its value in his avaricious eyes. It may be mentioned that the servants of the owner—a cook, a housemaid and a page-boy—had stopped on to oblige Sir Simon, and were ruled over by Mrs. Gilroy, much to their disgust. The housekeeper was by no means a pleasant mistress, and turned their intended holiday into a time of particularly hard work.

It was about the servants that Mrs. Gilroy spoke to her master one morning shortly after the occupation of the house. Sir Simon, accurately dressed as usual, and looking like a character out of Dickens as delineated by Phiz, was seated beside a comfortable fire supping a cup of plasmon cocoa, as containing the most nutriment in the least expensive form. While enjoying it, he mentally calculated various sums owing from various tenants about which he had come to see his lawyers.

The room was of no great size, on the ground floor, and had but two windows, which looked out on the dreary, untidy gardens. Like the exterior of the house, it had been newly painted and decorated, and was also furnished in a cheap way with chairs and tables, sofas and cabinets attractive to the uneducated eye, but detestable to anyone who could appreciate art. The scheme of color was garish, and, but that the blinds were pulled half-way down, so as to exclude too searching a light, would have jarred on Sir Simon's nerves. Lucy Randolph, who sat reading near the window, shuddered at the newness and veneer of her surroundings and thought regretfully of the lovely, mellow old *Hall*, where everything was in keeping and hallowed *by antiquity*. All the same, this too brilliantly-cheap

room was cosy and comfortable, bright and cheery, and a pleasing contrast to the foggy, gray, damp weather. Perhaps it was this contrast which its decorator had desired to secure.

Mrs. Gilroy, with folded hands, stood at her master's elbow, a tall, thin, silent, demure woman with down-cast eyes. Plainly dressed in black silk, somewhat worn, and with carefully-mended lace, she looked like a lady who had seen better days. Her hair, and eyes, and skin, and lips, were all of a drab color, by no means pleasing, and she moved with the stealthy step of a cat. Indeed, the servants openly expressed their opinion that she was one, and she certainly had a somewhat feline look. But, with all her softness and nun-like meekness, an occasional glance from her light eyes showed that she could scratch when necessary. No one knew who she was or where she came from, but she looked like a woman with a history. What that was only she and Sir Simon knew, and neither was communicative. Lucy Randolph hated her, and indeed no love was lost between the two. Mrs. Gilroy looked on Lucy as a pauper living on Sir Simon's charity, and Miss Randolph regarded the silent housekeeper as a spy. Each annoyed the other on every occasion in that skilful way known to the sex. But the war was carried on out of the old man's sight. That autocrat would speedily have put an end to it had they dared to skirmish in his presence.

"Well! well! well!" snapped Sir Simon, who talked something like George III. in reiterating his words. "What's the matter? What?"

"I have to complain of the housemaid Jane, sir."

"Then don't. I pay you to keep the servants quiet,

not to bother me with their goings-on. Well! well! well!" somewhat inconsistently, "what's Jane been doing?"

"Receiving a follower—a soldier—one of those new young men who are going to the war."

"An Imperial Yeoman?" put in Miss Randolph, looking up with interest.

"Yes, Miss," responded Mrs. Gilroy, not looking round. "Cook tells me the young man comes nearly every evening, and makes love to Jane!"

"What! what!" said the baronet, setting down his cup irritably. "Tell the hussy to go at once. Love?" This in a tone of scorn. "As though I've not had enough worry over that with Bernard. Tell her to go."

Mrs. Gilroy shook her head. "We can't dismiss her, sir. She belongs to the house, and Mr. Jeffrey"—

"I'll see him about it later. If he knew he certainly would not allow such things. A soldier—eh—what? Turn him out, Gilroy, turn him out! Won't have it, won't have him! There! you can go."

"Will you be out to-day, sir?"

"Yes, I go to see my lawyers. Do you think I come to town to waste time, Gilroy? Go away."

But the housekeeper did not seem eager to go. She cast a look on Lucy eloquent of a desire to be alone with Sir Simon. That look Lucy took no notice of, although she understood it plainly. She suspected Mrs. Gilroy of hating Julius Beryl and of favoring Bernard. Consequently, all the influence of Mrs. Gilroy would be put forth to help the exiled heir. Lucy was fond of Bernard, but she was engaged to Julius, and, dragged both ways by liking and duty, she was forced to a great extent to remain neutral. But she did not intend to

let Mrs. Gilroy have the honor and glory of bringing Bernard back to the Hall. Therefore she kept her seat by the window and her eyes on her book. Mrs. Gilroy tightened her thin lips and accepted defeat, for the moment. A ring at the door gave her an excuse to go.

"It's Julius," said Lucy, peeping out.

"What does he want?" asked Sir Simon, crossly. "Tell him to wait, Gilroy. I can't see him at once. Lucy, stop here, I want to speak."

The housekeeper left the room to detain Mr. Beryl, and Lucy obediently resumed her seat. She was a handsome, dark girl, with rather a high color and a temper to match. But she knew when she was well off and kept her temper in check for fear of Sir Simon turning her adrift. He would have done so without scruple had it suited him. Lucy was therefore astute and assumed a meekness she was far from possessing. Mrs. Gilroy saw through her, but Lucy—as the saying goes—pulled the wool over the old man's eyes.

Sir Simon took a turn up and down the room. "What about Bernard?" he asked, abruptly stopping before her.

Lucy looked up with an innocent smile. "Dear Bernard!" she said.

"Do you know where he is?" asked the baronet, taking no notice of the sweet smile and sweet speech.

"No, he has not written to me."

"But he has to that girl. You know her?"

"Alice! yes, but Alice doesn't like me. She refuses to speak to me about Bernard. You see," said Lucy, pensively, "I am engaged to Julius, and as you have sent Bernard away—"

“Julius comes in for my money, is that it?”

“Not in my opinion,” said Miss Randolph, frankly, “but Alice Malleson thinks so.”

“Then she thinks rightly.” Lucy started at this and colored with surprise at the outspoken speech. “Since Bernard has behaved so badly, Julius shall be my heir. The one can have the title, the other the money. All the same I don’t want Bernard to starve. I daresay Julius knows where he is, Lucy. Find out, and then I can send the boy something to go on with.”

“Oh!” said Lucy, starting to her feet and clasping her hands, “the Red Window,—I mean.”

“I should very much like to know what you *do* mean,” said Sir Simon, eyeing her. “The Red Window! Are you thinking of that ridiculous old legend of Sir Aymas and the ghost?”

“Yes,” assented Miss Randolph, “and of Bernard also.”

“What has he to do with the matter?”

“He asked me, if you showed any signs of relenting, to put a light in the Red Window at the Hall. Then he would come back.”

“Oh!” Sir Simon did not seem to be displeased. “Then you can put the light in the window when we go back in three weeks.”

“You will forgive him?”

“I don’t say that. But I want to see him settled in some reputable way. After all,” added the old man, sitting down, “I have been hard on the boy. He is young, and, like all fools, has fallen in love with a pretty face. This Miss Malleson—if she has any right to a name at all—is not the bride I should have chosen *for Bernard*. Now you, my dear Lucy—”

"I am engaged to Julius," she interposed quickly, and came towards the fire. "I love Julius."

"Hum! there's no accounting for tastes. I think Bernard is the better of the two."

"Bernard has always been a trouble," said Lucy, "and Julius has never given you a moment's uneasiness."

"Hum," said Sir Simon again, his eyes fixed on the fire. "I don't believe Julius is so good as you make him out to be. Now Bernard—"

"Uncle," said Lucy, who had long ago been instructed to call her relative by this name, "why don't you make it up with Bernard? I assure you Julius is so good, he doesn't want to have the money."

"And you?" The old man looked at her sharply.

"I don't either. Julius has his own little income, and earns enough as an architect to live very comfortably. Let me marry Julius, dear uncle, and we will be happy. Then you can take back Bernard and let him marry dear, sweet Alice."

"I doubt one woman when she praises another," said Sir Simon, dryly. "Alice may be very agreeable."

"She is beautiful and clever."

The baronet looked keenly at Lucy's flushed face, trying to fathom her reason for praising the other woman. He failed, for Miss Randolph's face was as innocent as that of a child. "She is no doubt a paragon, my dear," he said; "but I won't have her marry Bernard. By this time the young fool must have come to his senses. Find out from Julius where he is, and—"

"Julius may not know!"

"If Julius wants my money he will keep an eye on Bernard."

“So as to keep Bernard away, said Lucy, impetuously. “Ah, uncle, how can you? Julius doesn’t want the money—”

“You don’t know that.”

“Ask him yourself then.”

“I will.” Sir Simon rang the bell to intimate to Mrs. Gilroy that Julius could be shown up. “If he doesn’t want it, of course I can leave it to someone else.”

“To Bernard.”

“Perhaps. And yet I don’t know,” fumed Sir Simon. “The rascal defied me! He offered to pitch me out of the window if I said a word against that Alice of his. I want Bernard to marry you—”

“I am engaged to Julius.”

“So you said before,” snapped the other. “Well, then, Miss Perry. She is an heiress.”

“And as plain as Alice is handsome.”

“What does that matter? She is good-tempered. However, it doesn’t matter. I won’t be friends with Bernard unless he does what I tell him. He must give up Alice and marry Miss Perry. Try the Red Window scheme when you go back to the Hall, Lucy. It will bring Bernard to see me, as you say.”

“It will,” said Lucy, but by no means willingly. “Bernard comes down at times to the Hall to watch for the light. But I can make a Red Window here.”

“Bernard doesn’t know the house.”

“I am sure he does,” said Lucy. “He has to go to the lawyers for what little money he inherits from his father, and Mr. Durham may have told him you are here. Then if I put the light behind a red piece of paper or chintz, Bernard will come here.”

“*It is all romantic rubbish,*” grumbled the old man,

warming his hands. "But do what you like, child. I want to give Bernard a last chance." At this moment Julius appeared. He was a slim young man with a mild face, rather expressionless. His hair and eyes were brown. He was irreproachably dressed, and did not appear to have much brain power. Also, from the expression of his eyes he was of a sly nature. Finally, Mr. Beryl was guarded in his speech, being quite of the opinion that speech was given to hide thoughts. He saluted his uncle affectionately, kissed Lucy's cheek in a cold way, and sat down to observe what a damp, dull day it was and how bad for Sir Simon's rheumatism. A more colorless, timid, meek young saint it would have been hard to find in the whole of London.

"I have brought you some special snuff," he said, extending a packet to his host. "It comes from Taberley's."

"Ah, thank you. I know the shop. A very good one! Do you get your cigars there, Julius?"

"I never smoke," corrected the good young man, coldly.

Sir Simon sneered. "You never do anything manly," he said contemptuously. "Well, why are you here?"

"I wish, with your permission, to take Lucy to the theatre on Friday," said Mr. Beryl. "Mrs. Webber is going with me, and she can act as chaperon."

"I should think she needed one herself. A nasty, flirting little cat of a woman," said Sir Simon, rudely. "Would you like to go, Lucy?"

"If you don't mind, uncle."

"Bah!" said the old man with a snarl. "How good you two are. Where is the theatre, Julius?"

"Near at hand. The Curtain Theatre."

"Ah! That's only two streets away. What is the play?"

"*As You Like It*, by—"

"By Chaucer, I suppose," snapped the old man. "Don't you think I know my Shakespeare? What time will you call for Lucy?"

"At half-past seven in the carriage with Mrs. Webber."

"Your own carriage?"

"I am not rich enough to afford one," said Julius, smiling. "Mrs. Webber's carriage, uncle. We will call for Lucy and bring her back safely at eleven or thereabouts."

"Very good; but no suppers, mind. I don't approve of Mrs. Webber taking Lucy to the Cecil or the Savoy."

"There is no danger of that, uncle," said Lucy, delighted at gaining permission.

"I hope not," said the old man ungraciously. "You can go, Lucy. I want to speak to Julius."

A look, unseen by the baronet, passed between the two, and then Lucy left the room. When alone, Sir Simon turned to his nephew. "Where is Bernard?" he asked.

A less clever man than Julius would have feigned and feigned surprise, but this astute young gentleman answered at once. "He has enlisted in the Imperial Yeomanry and goes out to the war in a month."

Sir Simon turned pale and rose. "He must not—he must not," he said, considerably agitated. "He will be killed, and then—"

"What does it matter?" said Julius coolly—"you *have disinherited him*—at least, I understand so."

"He defied me," shivered the baronet, warming his hands again and with a pale face; "but I did not think he would enlist. I won't have him go to the war. He must be bought out."

"I think he would refuse to be bought out now," said Beryl, dryly. "I don't fancy Bernard, whatever his faults, is a coward."

"My poor boy!" said Sir Simon, who was less hard than he looked. "It is your fault that this has happened, Julius."

"Mine, uncle?"

"Yes. You told me about Miss Malleeson."

"I knew you would not approve of the match," said Julius, quietly.

"And you wanted me to cut off Bernard with a shilling—"

"Not for my own sake," said Julius, calmly. "You need not leave a penny to me, Sir Simon."

"Don't you want the money? It's ten thousand a year."

"I should like it very much," assented Beryl, frankly; "but I do not want it at the price of my self-respect."

The old man looked at him piercingly, but could learn nothing from his inscrutable countenance. But he did not trust Julius in spite of his meek looks, and inwardly resolved to meet craft by craft. He bore a grudge against this young man for having brought about the banishment of his grandson, and felt inclined to punish him. Yet if Julius did not want the money, Sir Simon did not know how to wound him. Yet he doubted if Julius scorned wealth so much as he pretended; therefore he *arranged how to circumvent him.*

"Very well," he said, "since Bernard has disobeyed me, you alone can be my heir. You will have the money without any loss of your self-respect. Come with me this morning to see Durham."

"I am at your service, uncle," said Julius, quietly, although his eyes flashed. "But Bernard?"

"We can talk of him later. Come!"

The attentive Beryl helped Sir Simon on with his overcoat and wrapped a muffler round his throat. Then he went out to select a special four-wheeler instead of sending the page-boy. When he was absent, Mrs. Gilroy appeared in the hall where Sir Simon waited, and, seeing he was alone, came close to him.

"Sir," she said quietly, "this girl Jane has described the young man's looks who comes to see her."

"Well! well! well!"

"The young man—the soldier," said Mrs. Gilroy, with emphasis—"has come only since we arrived here. Jane met him a week before our arrival, and since we have been in the house this soldier has visited her often."

"What has all this to do with me?" asked Sir Simon.

"Because she described the looks of the soldier. Miss Randolph says he is an Imperial Yeoman."

Sir Simon started. "Has Miss Randolph seen him?" he asked.

"No. She only goes by what I said this morning to you. But the description, Sir Simon—" Here Mrs. Gilroy sank her voice to a whisper and looked around—"suits Mr. Gore."

"Bernard! Ah!" Sir Simon caught hold of a chair to steady himself. "Why—what—yes. Julius said he *was an Imperial Yeoman* and—"

“And he comes here to see the housemaid,” said Mrs. Gilroy, nodding.

“To spy out the land,” cried the baronet, in a rage. “Do you think that my grandson would condescend to housemaids? He comes to learn how I am disposed—if I am ill. The money—the money—all self—self—self!” He clenched his hand as the front door opened. “Good-by, Mrs. Gilroy, if you see this Imperial Yeoman, say I am making a new will,” and with a sneer Sir Simon went out.

Mrs. Gilroy looked up to heaven and caught sight of Lucy listening on the stairs.

CHAPTER III

THE WILL

Mr. Durham was a smart young lawyer of the new school. The business was an old one and lucrative; but while its present owner was still under thirty, his father died and he was left solely in charge. Wiseacres prophesied that, unguided by the shrewdness of the old solicitor, Durham junior, would lose the greater part, if not all, of his clients. But the young man had an old head on young shoulders. He was clever and hard-worked, and, moreover, possessed a great amount of tact. The result was that he not only retained the old clients of the firm, but secured new ones, and under his sway the business was more flourishing than ever. Also Mark Durham did not neglect social duties, and by his charm of manner, backed by undeniable business qualities, he managed to pick up many wealthy clients while enjoying himself. He always had an eye to the main chance, and mingled business judiciously with sober pleasures.

The office of Durham & Son—the firm still retained the old title although the son alone owned the business—was near Chancery Lane, a large, antique house which had been the residence of a noble during the reign of the Georges. The rooms were nobly proportioned, their ceilings painted and decorated, and attached to the railings which guarded the front of the *house could still be seen the extinguishers into which servants had thrust torches in the times they lighted*

belles and beaux to splendid sedan chairs. A plate on the front intimated that a famous author had lived and died within the walls; so Durham & Son were housed in a way not unbecoming to the dignity of the firm. Mr. Durham's own room overlooked a large square filled with ancient trees, and was both well-furnished and well-lighted. Into this Sir Simon and his nephew were ushered, and here they were greeted by the young lawyer.

"I hope I see you well, Sir Simon?" said Durham, shaking hands. He was a smart, well-dressed, handsome young fellow with an up-to-date air, and formed a striking contrast to the baronet in his antique garb. As the solicitor spoke he cast a side glance at Beryl, whom he knew slightly, and he mentally wondered why the old man had brought him along. Sir Simon had never spoken very well of Julius, but then he rarely said a good word of anyone.

"I am as well as can be expected," said Sir Simon, grumpily, taking his seat near the table, which was covered with books, and papers, and briefs, and red tape, and all the paraphernalia of legal affairs. "About that will of mine—"

"Yes?" inquired Durham, sitting, with another glance at Beryl, and still more perplexed as to the baronet's motive for bringing the young man. "I have had it drawn out in accordance with your instructions. It is ready for signing."

"Read it."

"In the presence of—" Durham indicated Beryl in a puzzled way.

"I can go, uncle, if you wish," said Julius, hastily, *and rose.*

“Sit down!” commanded the old man. “You are interested in the will.”

“All the more reason I should not hear it read,” said Julius, still on his feet.

Sir Simon shrugged his shoulders and turned his back on his too particular nephew. “Get the will, Durham, and read it.”

It was not the lawyer’s business to argue in this especial instance, so he speedily summoned a clerk. The will was brought, carefully engrossed on parchment, and Durham rustled the great sheets as he resumed his seat. “You wish me to read it all?” he asked hesitatingly.

Sir Simon nodded, and, leaning his chin on the knob of his cane, disposed himself to listen. Beryl could not suppress an uneasy movement, which did not escape his uncle’s notice, and he smiled in a grim way. Durham, without further preamble, read the contents of the will, clearly and deliberately, without as much as a glance in the direction of the person interested. This was Julius, and he grew pale with pleasure as the lawyer proceeded.

The will provided legacies for old servants, but no mention was made of Mrs. Gilroy, a fact which Beryl noted and secretly wondered at. Various bequests were made to former friends, and arrangements set forth as to the administration of the estate. The bulk of the property was left to Julius Beryl on condition that he married Lucy Randolph, for whom otherwise no provision was made. The name of Bernard Gore was left out altogether. When Durham ended he laid down the will with a rather regretful air, and discreetly stared at *the fire*. He liked young Gore and did not care for the

architect. Therefore he was annoyed that the latter should benefit to the exclusion of the former.

"Good!" said Sir Simon, who had followed the reading with close attention. "Well?" he asked his nephew.

Beryl stammered. "I hardly know how to thank you. I am not worthy—"

"There—there—there!" said the old man tartly. "We understand all that. Can you suggest any alteration?"

"No, uncle. The will is perfect."

"What do you think, Durham?" said Gore, with a dry chuckle.

"I think," said the lawyer, his eyes still on the fire, "that some provision should be made for your grandson. He has been taught to consider himself your heir, and has been brought up in that expectation. It is hard that, at his age, he should be thrown on the world for—"

"For disobedience," put in Beryl, meekly.

Sir Simon chuckled again. "Yes, for disobedience. You are not aware, Durham, that Bernard wants to marry a girl who has no name and no parents, and no money—the companion of a crabbed old cat called Miss Plantagenet."

"I know," said the young lawyer, nodding. "She is the aunt of Lord Conniston, who told me about the matter."

"I thought Lord Conniston was in America," said Julius, sharply.

"I saw him before he went to America," retorted the solicitor, who did not intend to tell Beryl that Conniston

had been in his office on the previous day. "Why do you say that? Do you know him?"

"I know that he has a castle near my uncle's place."

"Cove Castle," snapped Sir Simon. "All the county knows that. But he never comes near the place. Did you meet Lord Conniston at Miss Plantagenet's, Julius?"

"I have never met him at all," rejoined the meek young man stiffly, "and I have been to Miss Plantagenet's only in the company of Bernard."

"Aha!" chuckled Sir Simon. "You did not fall in love with that girl?"

"No, uncle. Of course I am engaged to Miss Randolph."

"You can call her 'Lucy' to a near relative like myself," said the baronet, dryly. "Do you know Miss Malleeson, Durham?"

"No. I have not that pleasure."

"But no doubt Bernard has told you about her."

Durham shook his head. "I have not seen Gore for months."

"Are you sure? He inherits a little money from his father; and you—"

"Yes! I quite understand. I have charge of that money. Gore came a few months ago, and I gave him fifty pounds or so. That was after he quarrelled with you, Sir Simon. Since then I have not seen him."

"Then he does not know that I am in Crimea Square."

"Not that I know of. Certainly not from me. Is he in town?"

It was Beryl who answered this. "Bernard has enlisted as an Imperial Yeoman," said he.

“Then I think the more of him,” said Durham quickly. “Every man who can, should go to the Front.”

“Why don’t you go yourself, Durham?”

“If I had not my business to look after I certainly should,” replied the lawyer. “But regarding Mr. Gore. Will you make any provision for him, Sir Simon?”

“I can’t say. He deserves nothing. I leave it to Julius.”

“Should the money come into my possession soon,” said Julius, virtuously, “a thing I do not wish, since it means your death, dear uncle, I should certainly allow Bernard two hundred a year.”

“Out of ten thousand,” put in Durham. “How good of you!”

“He deserves no more for his disobedience to his benefactor.”

Sir Simon chuckled yet again. “I am quite of Julius’s opinion,” he declared. “Bernard has behaved shamefully. I wanted him to marry a Miss Perry, who is rich.”

“Why can’t you let him marry the woman he loves?” said Durham, with some heat. “They can live on ten thousand a year and be happy. What is the use of getting more money than is needed? Besides, from what I hear, this Miss Malleeson is a charming girl.”

“With no name and no position,” said Sir Simon, “a mere paid companion. I don’t want my grandson to make such a bad match. If he does, he must take the consequences. And he will—”

“Certainly he will,” said Beryl, anxious about the signing of the will. “He has been hard-hearted for months, and shows no signs of giving in. Since I am

to inherit the money I will allow Bernard two hundred a year, or such sum as Sir Simon thinks fit."

"Two hundred is quite enough," said the baronet. Mr. Durham, we will see now about signing this will."

"Can I not persuade you to—"

"No! You can't persuade me to do anything but what I have done. I am sure Julius here will make a better use of the money than Bernard will. Won't you, Julius?"

"I hope so," replied Beryl, rising; "but I trust it will be many a long day before I inherit the money, dear uncle."

"Make your mind easy," said Sir Simon, dryly. "I intend to live for many a year yet."

"I think I had better go now," observed Julius, rising.

"Won't you stop and see the will signed?"

"No, uncle. I think it is better, as I inherit, that I should be out of the room. Who knows but what Bernard might say, did I remain, that I exercised undue influence?"

"Not while I am present," said Durham, touching a bell.

"All the same I had better go," insisted the young man. "Uncle?"

"Please yourself," replied Gore. "You can go if you like. I shall see you on Friday when you come for Lucy."

"To take her to the Curtain Theatre. Yes! But I trust I will see you before then, uncle." And here, as a clerk entered the room and was apparently, with *Durham*, about to witness the will, Julius departed. He *chuckled to himself* when he was outside, thinking of

his good luck. But at the door his face altered. "He might change his mind," thought Beryl. "There's no reliance to be placed on him. I wish—" he opened and shut his fist; "but he won't die for a long time."

While Julius was indulging in these thoughts, Sir Simon had taken up the will to glance over it. He also requested Durham to send the clerk away for a few moments. Rather surprised, the lawyer did so, thinking the old man changeable. When alone with his legal adviser the baronet walked to the fire and thrust the will into it. Durham could not forbear an ejaculation of surprise, "What's that for?"

"To punish Julius," said Sir Simon, placidly returning to his seat, as though he had done nothing out of the way. "He is a mean sneak. He told me about Bernard being in love with that girl so as to create trouble."

"But you don't approve of the match?"

"No, I certainly do not, and I daresay that when I insisted on Bernard marrying Miss Perry that the truth would have come out. All the same it was none of Beryl's business to make mischief. Besides, he is a sly creature, and if I made the will in his favor, who knows but what he might not contrive to get me out of the way?"

"No," said Durham, thoughtfully, but well pleased for Bernard's sake that the will had been destroyed. "I don't think he has courage to do that. Besides, people don't murder nowadays."

"Don't they?" said Sir Simon; "look in the newspapers."

"I mean that what you think Julius might do is

worthy of a novel. I don't fancy novels are true to life."

"Anything Julius did would be just like a novel. I tell you, Durham, he is a villain of the worst; I don't trust him. I have led him on to think that the will has been made in his favor; and when he learns the truth he will be punished for his greed."

"But, Sir Simon," argued the lawyer, "by letting him think the will is made in his favor, you have placed him in the very position which, according to you, might lead to his attempt to murder."

"I'll take care of myself," said the old man, somewhat inconsistently, for certainly he was acting differently to what he said. "By the way, you have the other will?"

"Yes! It leaves everything to Bernard save the legacies, which remain much the same. Of course, in the first will is mentioned an annuity to Mrs. Gilroy."

"Hum, yes. I left her out of the new will. The fact is, I don't trust Mrs. Gilroy. She's too friendly with Julius for my taste."

"I understood her to be on the side of Bernard."

"Oh, she's on whatever side suits her," said Sir Simon, testily. "However, let the first will stand. She's a poor thing and has had a hard life. I have every right to leave her something to live on."

"Why?" asked Durham, bluntly. He found Mrs. Gilroy something of a mystery, and did not know what was the bond between her and Sir Simon.

"Never you mind. I have my reasons, so let things remain as they are. Bernard can marry Miss Malle-son when I am dead if he chooses."

"He thinks he has been disinherited?"

"Yes! I told him so. The truth will come as a pleasant surprise."

"Won't you take him back into favor and tell him?" urged Durham.

No! not at present. If we met, there would only be more trouble. He has a temper inherited from his Italian mother, and I have a temper also. He behaved very rudely to me, and it's just as well he should suffer a little. But I don't want him to go to the war. He must be bought out."

"I fear Bernard is not the man to be bought out."

"Oh, I know he is brave enough, and I suppose being bought out at the eleventh hour when war is on is not heroic. All the same, I don't want him to be shot."

"You must leave things to chance," said Durham decidedly. "There is only one way in which you can make him give up his soldiering."

"What's that?"

"Make friends with him, and ask him to wait till you die."

"No, no, no!" said Sir Simon, irritably. "He must keep away from me for a time. After all, he is the son of his father, and, bad as Walter was, I loved him for his mother's sake. As for the Italian woman—"

"Mrs. Gore! She is dead."

"I know she is. But her brother Guiseppe is alive, and a scoundrel he is. The other day he came to the Hall and tried to force his way into the house. A gambler, a rogue, Durham—that's what Guiseppe is."

"What is his other name?"

"Tolomeo! He comes from Siena."

"I understood Mrs. Gore—your son's wife—came from Florence."

"So she said. She declared she was the member of a decayed Florentine family. But afterwards I learned from Guiseppe that the Tolomeo nobles are Sienese—and a bad lot they are. He is a musician, I believe—a plausible scamp. I hope he has not got hold of Bernard."

"Bernard is his nephew."

"I know that," snapped the old man. "All the same, the uncle is sadly in want of money, and would exercise an undue influence over Bernard."

"I don't think Gore is the man to be controlled," said Durham, sagely.

"You don't know. He is young after all. But you know, by the will, I have put it out of Bernard's power to assist Tolomeo. If he gives him as much as a shilling the money is lost to him and goes to Lucy."

"That is rather a hard provision," said Durham, after a pause.

"I do it for the boy's good," replied Gore, rising; "but I must get home now. By the way, about that lease," and the two began to talk of matters connected with the estate.

Sir Simon after this refused to discuss his erring grandson, but Durham, who was friendly to Bernard, insisted on recurring to the forbidden subject. However it was just when the old man was going that he reverted to the bone of contention, "I wish you would let me tell Bernard that you are well disposed toward him."

"Ah! you plead for the scamp," said Sir Simon, angrily.

"Well, I was at Eton with him, you know, and we are great friends. If he is an Imperial Yeoman there will be no difficulty in seeing him."

"Leave matters as they are. I have ascertained that he won't go to the war for six weeks. Julius found that out for me, so wait till he is on the eve of sailing. Then we'll see. If nothing else will keep him at home, I'll make it up. But I think a little hardship will do him good. He behaved very badly."

"Bernard is naturally hot tempered."

"So am I. Therefore, let us keep apart for a time. Who knows what would happen did we meet. No, Durham, let Bernard think that I am still angry. If Lucy sets a lamp in the Red Window that's a different thing. I shan't interfere with her romance."

"The Red Window. What's that?"

"A silly legend of the Gore family of which you know nothing. I have no time to repeat rubbish. I'll come and see you again about that lease, Durham. Meanwhile, should Bernard be hard up, help him out of your own pocket. I'll make it up to you."

"He wouldn't accept alms. Besides, he has enough to go on with. I have two hundred of his money in hand."

"Then I have nothing more to say. I'm sorry the fellow isn't starving. His conduct to me was shameful." And Sir Simon went grumbling home.

"All the same, I'll see Bernard," thought Durham, returning to his office.

CHAPTER IV

A STRANGE ADVENTURE

Conniston and Bernard Gore were as much as possible in one another's company during the stay of the former in town. Thinking he would go out to the Cape sooner than he did, Bernard had impulsively got rid of his civilian clothes, and therefore had to keep constantly to his uniform. But in those days everyone was in khaki, as the war fever was in the air, so amongst the throng he passed comparatively unnoticed. At all events he managed to keep away from the fashionable world, and therefore saw neither Sir Simon nor Lucy. Beyond the fact that his grandfather was in town Bernard knew nothing, and was ignorant that the old man had taken up his abode in Crimea Square. So he told Durham when the lawyer questioned him.

The three old schoolfellows came together at Durham's house, which was situated on Camden Hill. Faithful to his intention to see Gore, the lawyer had sent a note asking Conniston where Bernard was to be found. Already Conniston had told Durham of his chance meeting in the Park, so when he received Durham's letter he insisted on taking Gore to dinner at the lawyer's house. Bernard was only too glad, and the three had a long talk over old times. The dinner was excellent, the wine was good, and although the young man's housekeeper was rather surprised that her *precise master* should dine with a couple of soldiers, she

did her best to make them comfortable. When the meal was ended Durham carried off his guests to the library, where they sat around a sea-wood fire sipping coffee and smoking the excellent cigars of their host. Durham alone was in evening dress, as Gore kept to khaki, and Conniston, for the sake of company, retained his lancer uniform. Their host laughed as he contemplated the two.

"I feel inclined to go to the front myself," said he, handing Gore a glass of kummel, "but the business would suffer."

"Leave it in charge of a clerk," said Conniston, in his hair-brained way. "You have no ties to keep you here. Your parents are dead—you aren't married, and—"

"I may be engaged for all you know."

"Bosh! There's a look about an engaged man you can't mistake. Look at Bernard there. He is—"

"*Pax! Pax!*" cried Gore, laughing. "Leave me alone, Conniston. But are you really engaged, Mark?"

"No," said Mark, rubbing his knees rather dismally. "I should like to be. A home-loving man like myself needs a wife to smile at him across the hearth."

"And just now you talked of going to the front," put in the young lord. "You don't know your own mind. But, I say, this is jolly. Back I go to barracks to-morrow and shall remember this comfortable room and this glimpse of civilized life."

"You were stupid to enlist," said Durham, sharply. "Had you come to me, we could have arranged matters better. You knew I'd see you through, Conniston. I have ample means."

"I don't want to be seen through," said Conniston,

wilfully. "Besides, it's fun, this war. I'm crazy to go, and now that Bernard's coming along it will be like a picnic."

"Not much, I fear," said Bernard, "if all the tales we hear are true."

"Right," said Durham. "This won't be the military promenade the generality of people suppose it will be. The Boers are obstinate."

"So are we," argued Conniston; "but don't let us talk shop. We'll get heaps of that at the Cape. Mark, you wanted to see Bernard about some business. Shall I leave the room?"

"No, no!" said Gore, hastily. "Mark can say what he likes about my business before you, Conniston. I have nothing to conceal."

"Nothing?" asked Durham, looking meaningfully at his friend.

Gore allowed an expression of surprise to flit across his expressive face. "What are you driving at, Mark?"

"Well," said Durham, slowly, "your grandfather came to see me the other day on business—"

"I can guess what the business was," put in Bernard, bitterly, and thinking that a new will had been made.

The lawyer smiled. "Quite so. But don't ask me to betray the secrets of my client. But Sir Simon knew you were in the Imperial Yeomanry, Bernard. He learned that from Beryl."

"Who is, no doubt, spying on me. It is thanks to Julius that I had the row with my grandfather. He—"

"You needn't trouble to explain," interrupted Durham. "I know. Sir Simon explained. But he also asked me if you knew he was in town."

"I told Bernard," said Conniston, "and you told me."

"Yes. But does Bernard know where Sir Simon is stopping?"

"No," said Gore, emphatically, "I don't."

"Neither do I. What are you getting at, Mark?"

"It's a queer thing," went on Durham, taking no notice of Conniston's question, "but afterwards—yesterday, in fact—Sir Simon wrote saying that he heard from Mrs. Gilroy of an Imperial Yeoman who had been visiting in the kitchen of Crimea Square—"

"What about Crimea Square?" asked Gore, quickly.

"Your grandfather is stopping there—in No. 32; old Jefferies' house."

"Oh! I knew nothing of that. Go on."

"Sir Simon," proceeded the lawyer, looking at Gore, "stated in his letter that the description of the soldier, as given by the maid, applied to you, Bernard."

Gore stared and looked puzzled, as did Conniston. "But I don't quite understand," said the former. "Do you mean that my grandfather thinks that I have been making love to some servant in Crimea Square?"

"In No. 32. Yes. That is what Sir Simon's letter intimated to me."

The other men looked at one another and burst out laughing. "What jolly rubbish!" said Lord Conniston. "Why, Bernard is the last person to do such a thing."

"It's all very well to laugh," said Durham, rather tartly, "but you see, Gore, Sir Simon may think that you went to the kitchen, not to make love to the maid, but to see how he was disposed towards you."

"But, Mark, I haven't been near the place."

"Are you sure?" asked Mark, sharply.

Bernard, always hot-tempered, jumped up. "I won't

bear that from any man," he said. "You have no right to doubt my word, Durham."

"Don't fire up over nothing, Gore. It is in your own interest that I speak. I knew well enough that you wouldn't make love to this housemaid mentioned by Sir Simon—Jane Riordan is her name. But I fancied you might have gone to see if your grandfather—"

"I went to see nothing," replied Gore, dropping back into his chair with a disgusted air. "I don't sneak round in that way. When my grandfather kicked me out of the house, I said good-bye to Alice and came to London. I saw you, to get some money, and afterwards I enlisted. I never knew that Sir Simon was in town till Conniston told me. I never knew he lived in Crimea Square till you explained. My duties have kept me hard at work all the time. And even if they hadn't," said the young man, wrathfully, "I certainly wouldn't go making love to servants to gain information about my own people."

"Quite so," said Durham, smoothly. "Then why—"

"Drop the subject, Mark."

"Sit down and be quiet, Bernard," said Conniston, pulling him back into his seat, for he had again risen. "Mark has something to say."

"If you will let me say it," said Durham, with the air of a man severely tried by a recalcitrant witness.

"Go on, then," said Bernard, and flung himself into his chair in a rather sullen manner. His troubles had worn his nerves thin, and even from his old schoolfellow he was not prepared to take any scolding. All the same, he secretly saw that he was accusing Durham of *taking a liberty* where none was meant.

"*It's this way,*" said the lawyer, when Gore was

smoothed down for the time being. "We know that Beryl hates you."

"He wants the money."

"I know that." Durham smiled when he thought of the destroyed will; but he could hardly explain his smile. "Well, it is strange that the description given by the maid of this soldier—and a yeoman, mind you—should be like you. Have you a double?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then someone is impersonating you so as to arouse the wrath of your grandfather against you. Sir Simon is a proud old man, and the idea that you condescended to flirt with—"

"But I didn't, I tell you!" cried the exasperated Gore.

"No. We know that. But Sir Simon, judging from his letter, thinks so."

"He has no right to do that. My conduct never gave him any reason to think I would sink so low."

"My dear chap," said Conniston, with the air of a Socrates, "when anyone has his monkey up, he will believe anything."

"Conniston is quite right," said the lawyer, "though he expresses himself with his usual elegance. Sir Simon, with Beryl at his elbow, is inclined to believe the worst of you, Bernard, and probably thinks you have deteriorated sufficiently to permit your making use of even so humble an instrument as a housemaid."

"Bah!" said Gore, in a rage. "What right has he to—"

"Don't be so furious, my dear man. I am advising you for your own good, and not charging seven-and-six *either*."

This made Bernard laugh. "But it does make a fellow furious to hear his nearest—I won't say dearest—think so badly of one."

"One's relatives always think the worst," said Conniston, oracularly. "Miss Plantagenet thinks so badly of me that I'll never see that five thousand a year. Miss Malleeson will have it, and you, Bernard, will live on it. *Pax! Pax!*" for Bernard gave him a punch on the shoulder.

"Dick, you're a silly ass! Go on, Durham."

"Well," said Durham, beginning in his invariable manner, "I fancy that Beryl is up to some trick. You have not been near the place; so someone made up to impersonate you is sneaking round. Of course, there is the other alternative, Mrs. Gilroy may be telling a lie!"

"She wouldn't," rejoined Gore, quickly. "She is on my side."

"So you told me. But your grandfather thinks otherwise. We were talking about you the other day."

"And Sir Simon said no good of me," was Bernard's remark. "But what is to be done?"

"Only one thing. Go and see your grandfather and have the matter sifted. If Mrs. Gilroy is lying you can make her prove the truth. If she tells the truth, you can see if Beryl has a hand in the matter."

Gore rose and began to pace the room. "I should like to see my grandfather," said he, "as I want to apologise for my behavior. But I am afraid if we come together there will be trouble."

"I daresay—if Beryl is at his elbow. Therefore, I do not advise you to call at Crimea Square. But when

Sir Simon goes down to the Hall again, you can make it your business to see him and set matters right."

"I am afraid that is impossible," said Gore, gloomily, "unless I give up Alice, and that I won't do." He struck the table hard.

"Don't spoil the furniture, Bernard," said Conniston, lighting a cigarette. "You do what Mark says. Go down to Hurseton."

"I don't want to be known in this kit, and I have parted with my plain clothes," objected the other.

"You always were an impulsive beast," said Conniston, with the candour of a long friendship. "Well, then"—he rose and crossed to the writing-table—"I'll scrawl a note to Mrs. Moon telling her to put you up at Cove Castle. She can hold her tongue, and the castle is in so out-of-the-way a locality that no one will spot you there. You can then walk across to Hurseton—it's only ten miles—and see if that Red Window is alight."

"Your grandfather said something about the Red Window," said Durham, while Conniston scribbled the note in a kind of print, since Mrs. Moon was not particularly well educated. "What is it?"

Bernard explained the idea of Lucy, and how she was playing the part of his friend, to let him know how matters stood. "I am always startled by a red window now," he said, laughing at his own folly, "as it means so much to me. The other night I saw a chemist's sign and it made me sit up."

"It's an absurdly romantic idea," said Durham, with all the scorn of a lawyer for the quaint. "Why revive an old legendary idea when a simple letter—"

"*Mrs. Gilroy and Julius* would stop any letters," said

Bernard, "that is, if she is hostile to me, which she may be. I am not sure of her attitude."

"What is the legend of the Red Window?" asked Durham.

"It's too long a story to tell," said Bernard, glancing at the clock, which pointed to a quarter to ten, "and I'm due at barracks. I'll tell you about it on another occasion. Meantime—"

"Meantime," said Durham, rising, "I advise you to drop red windows and legends and go down to see Sir Simon boldly. A short interview will put everything right."

"And might put everything wrong."

"No," said Durham, earnestly, "believe me, your grandfather will be more easy to deal with than you think. I am his solicitor and I dare not say much, but I advise you to see him as soon as you can. The sooner the better, since Beryl is a dangerous enemy to have."

"Well, Lucy is my friend."

"And Mrs. Gilroy your enemy along with Beryl."

"I'm not so sure of that," began Gore, when Conniston lounged towards him with a letter.

"You give that to Mrs. Moon," said he, "and she will put you up and hold her tongue and make things pleasant. But don't say I am in town, as I have not dated the letter."

"Does she think you are in America?" asked Bernard, putting the letter into his pocket, and promising to use it should occasion offer.

"Yes. She thinks a great deal of the West family," said Conniston, taking another glass of kummel, "and *she would howl* if she heard I was a mere private. And *I don't know* but what she may not know. I saw that

young brute of a Judas when I left you the other day, Bernard."

"Judas?" echoed Durham, who was unlocking the spirit-stand.

Conniston sat down and stretched out his legs. "He's Mrs. Moon's grandson. Jerry Moon is his name—but he's such a young scoundrel that I call him Judas as more appropriate. I got him a place with Taberley, the tobacconist, but he took money or something and was kicked out. The other day when I met him he was selling matches. I gave him half a sovereign to go back to his grandmother, so by this time I expect he's at Cove Castle telling her lies. I instructed him to hold his tongue about my soldiering."

"Why didn't you send him to me?" said Mark. "I would have frightened him, and made him hold his tongue."

"If you could frighten Judas you could frighten his father, the Old 'Un down below," said Conniston, laughing. "He's what the Artful Dodger would call a young Out-and-Outer; a kind of Jack Sheppard in grain. He'll come your way yet, Mark, passing by on his journey to the gallows. He's only thirteen, but a born criminal. He'll hold his tongue about me so long as it suits him, and sell me to make a sixpence. Oh, he's a delightful young scamp, I promise you!"

All this aimless chatter made Bernard rather impatient. "I must cut along," he said; "it's rather foggy and it will take me a long time to fetch my barracks. No, thank you, Mark, I don't want anything to drink. Give me a couple of those cigarettes, Conniston. *Good night.*"

"Won't you stop the night?" said Durham, hospitably. "Conniston is staying."

"He's on furlough and I'm not," said Bernard, who was now putting on his slouch hat in the hall. "Good night, Conniston. Good night, Durham."

"You'll think over what I told you," said the lawyer, opening the door himself and looking outside. "I say, what a fog! Stop here, Bernard."

"No! No! Thanks all the same." Gore stepped out into the white mist, buttoning his coat. "Give me a light. There! Go back and yarn with Dick. I'll come and see you again. As to Sir Simon—"

"What about him?"

"I'll think over what you said. If possible I'll go down and stop at Cove Castle, and see Sir Simon at night. By the way, what's the time, Durham?"

The lawyer was about to pull out his watch when Conniston appeared at the end of the hall in high spirits. "My dear friend," he said in a dramatic manner, "it is the twenty-third of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and—"

"Bosh!" interrupted Bernard. "The time, Mark?"

"Just ten o'clock. Good night!"

"Good night, and keep that wild creature in order. Conniston, I'll look you up to-morrow."

It was indeed a foggy night. Bernard felt as though he were passing through wool, and the air was bitterly cold. However, he thrust his hands into his pockets and smoked bravely as he felt his way down the hill. Hardly had he issued from the gate when he felt someone clutch his coat. Brave as Gore was he started, *for in this fog he might meet with all manner of unpleasant adventures.* However, being immediately un-

der a lamp, he saw that a small boy was holding on to him. A pretty lad he looked, though clothed in rags and miserable with the cold. In one hand he held a tray of matches and in the other a piece of bread. His feet were bare and his rags scarcely covered him. In a child-like, innocent manner he looked up into the face of the tall soldier. "Well, boy," said Bernard, feeling for sixpence, "Are you wanting to get home?"

"Ain't got no home," said the boy, hoarsely. "I sleeps in a barrel, I does, when 'ard up. It's you as the lady wants to see."

"The lady!" Bernard looked down at the imp. "What do you mean?"

"It's this way, my lord," said the boy, looking like a cherub of innocence. "The lady, she says to me that in this street you'll see, before twelve, a soldier in yellow clothes. Tell him to foller to the Red Winder."

"What's that?" asked Gore, sharply, and quite taken aback by hearing these words on the lips of this ragged brat. "Where did you see the lady, boy?"

"Down Kensington way," said the boy jerking his head over his shoulder. "She says, 'Tell him to foller to the Red Winder.' Come along!" and he darted off in the fog.

"But you must explain," began Bernard, when he stopped. The boy had disappeared into the fog, and wondering how he came to be in possession of this information which concerned him, Gore walked along feeling his way by the brick wall. Perhaps Lucy had sent the message, and the Red Window was to be seen in the Crimea Square house. Bernard wished to ask the boy further questions, but the lad had vanished. In much *perplexity* the young man went down the hill

towards Kensington High Street. As he paused at the corner wondering if it would be wise to go to the Square, and wondering also where it was, the boy suddenly appeared again at his elbow. "Come along across the road," he growled, and vanished again. Then Bernard got lost in the fog till the boy found him again.

Bernard, not thinking any harm could come of the adventure, as he had ample confidence in his right arm, went across the street. The boy reappeared and led him down a side street. Gore tried to seize the boy and to detain him in order to ask questions, but the imp kept well out of reach, and only appeared when he thought there was danger of the tall soldier losing his way. In this manner Bernard was led down the quiet street, 'longside a high wall and through the heart of the dense fog. He kept his eyes open for any possible assailant, and did not feel the least afraid. All the same, he began to think he was foolish to follow on such a will-o'-the-wisp errand. But that the boy had mentioned the Red Window, Bernard would have turned on his heel. As it was, he felt curious enough to proceed. Suddenly the boy—a few feet ahead—led him into a wide space which was densely filled with fog. Here his guide turned to the right, and then whistled. When Gore, who had followed, heard that whistle he tightened his hold on his stick. The boy had vanished, and there he was alone in the heart of the fog. No one appeared, and he could not even see his guide. Looking overhead, Bernard suddenly saw a Red Window on the first story of a house. The house loomed hugely through the fog and was in some measure revealed by the light of a street lamp which threw a *dull glimmer* on to steps ascending to the door. There

was a light behind the glass over the door, but the young man did not look at that. He was staring at the window in the first storey, which showed a fiery red color.

"I wonder if this is Crimea Square and the house," muttered Bernard, stepping forward. "And whether Lucy put that light there, and sent the boy to tell me. But how could she know I was with Durham to-night?"

Again he heard the whistle, and then came a shriek which apparently came from the house. Bernard ran to the steps, wondering if anything was the matter. The door opened, and a woman burst out of the house shrieking at the pitch of her voice—"Murder! Murder! Murder!" she cried. "Oh, the police—the police! Murder!"

"Mrs. Gilroy!" Bernard saw her face in the light which streamed from the open door, and which was thrown by the street lamp vaguely through the fog. She stopped and clutched him, staring into his face.

"Come," she said in a harsh whisper, and dragged him forward. Quite bewildered, Gore suffered himself to be led. Mrs. Gilroy dragged him rather than led him up the stairs and into a room. There he saw his grandfather seated by the fire with a handkerchief round his neck, and another tied across his mouth—quite dead. "Murder!" said Mrs. Gilroy.

CHAPTER V

LOST IN THE DARKNESS

While the terrible word was yet on the housekeeper's lips, Bernard stepped forward and loosened the handkerchiefs. That round the neck was one of Sir Simon's own, a yellow bandana woven of strong silk, and eminently suited to the deadly purpose it had been used for. But how had the dead man's own handkerchief been so utilised by the murderer? While untying the knot, Bernard wondered; but he gained an inkling into the method pursued when he removed the white handkerchief which had been bound across the mouth. It exhaled a faint odor of chloroform, so it was apparent that the old baronet had been first rendered unconscious, and then strangled with his own bandana. But who was guilty of the crime?

"What do you know of this?" asked Gore, in a hoarse voice, turning to the housekeeper.

She had ceased to cry out, and was staring at him with glittering eyes. At the same time she appeared to be listening intently. Far off could be heard the sound of approaching footsteps echoing along the pavement. Evidently a policeman, summoned by Mrs. Gilroy's shriek, was hurrying to see what was the matter. As the door had been left open he would know where to enter. These thoughts flashed through Mrs. Gilroy's *mind as she* stared at the pale young man. Also there *were sounds* in the lower parts of the house hinting

that the servants had been aroused. A distant clock struck the three quarters, and even at that terrible moment Bernard remembered that in his vague wanderings after the boy he had been forty-five minutes getting to Crimea Square. And Mrs. Gilroy still looked.

"What do you know of this?" repeated Gore, wondering at her silence.

She gave a gasp. "He is dead," said Mrs. Gilroy. "I wonder if he died hard. He was a strong old man."

Wondering more than ever at this strange speech, Bernard felt the pulse and the heart of his grandfather. There was no doubt that life was extinct, although it could not have been so long. The skin was still warm to the touch, but that might have been because the room was heated. Also, the dead man was seated close to the fire. "How terrible!" muttered Bernard, whose emotions were not yet under control. "I must get help."

He turned to go, but the housekeeper, suddenly becoming endowed with life, flung herself in his path. "No!" she said harshly. "Don't seek help if you value your life."

"What do you mean?" asked Gore, striving to shake off the hand she laid on his sleeve. "The servants are up—a policeman is evidently coming along. Hark! he is entering the hall. I must—"

"You go to the gallow," muttered Mrs. Gilroy clinging to him.

"I!" the perspiration burst out on Bernard's forehead, and he started back. "Are you mad?"

"You are, you are," went on the housekeeper, hurriedly, "you fool! It is known that your grandfather *disinherited you, and—*"

"You know I did not commit this crime."

"I know nothing. I—I" Mrs. Gilroy put her hand to her head. "It's the only way—the only way," she whispered to herself. "You killed him, you strangled him. I swear to it—I swear to it! Help!" she raised her voice to scream. "Help!"

"Let me go," cried Bernard, thinking he had been drawn into a trap.

But Mrs. Gilroy still clung with a force for which he would not have given her credit. Shrieking aloud she was dragged by the startled young man into the passage and towards the landing. Below, in the hall, the door of which was open, the cook and the housemaid were embracing a burly policeman, and terrified small page was looking up the stairs. On the vision of this alarmed group reeled Mrs. Gilroy, clinging and shrieking to Bernard—"Help me—help me! He will escape!" The policeman blew a shrill whistle and said a sharp word to the page, who scampered out of the door for dear life. The cook and housemaid receded towards the back of the hall as Bernard, dragging Mrs. Gilroy after him, flung himself down the stairs. He saw now that his position was dangerous, but his wits were so bewildered that he hardly knew what he was doing. As he reached the foot of the stair the policeman caught him by the coat. "I arrest you in the King's name," said the officer, promptly.

"Yes, yes! for murder—murder!" cried Mrs. Gilroy, breathlessly.

"Murder!" the other servants shrieked.

"Who is dead?" asked the policeman, with professional stolidity.

"Sir Simon Gore. This is his grandson. He has strangled him."

"It's a lie—a lie!" cried Bernard, very pale. "I did not enter—"

"Anything you say now will be used in evidence against you," said the policeman. "Come up the stairs, we must see this corpse. A titled man, too, and your grandfather—you audacious scoundrel!" and he shook the wretched young man.

"I tell you I am innocent," said Bernard, his lips dry and his face pale. "I came here—"

"To kill Sir Simon. Jane," cried Mrs. Gilroy, turning to the housemaid. "Don't you see who it is?"

Jane staggered forward supported by the cook. "Lor," she gasped in terror, "it's Bernard. Whatever did you—"

"You know him, then?" asked the officer.

"Yes! he's been making love and visiting me for the last week?"

"I thought so," cried Mrs. Gilroy, triumphantly. "Cook."

"I know him too," said the cook, keeping well out of the way. "It's the young soldier as courts Jane. Bernard's his name."

"I was never in this house before," said Gore, quite unnerved.

"Is your name Bernard?" asked the policeman.

"Yes! but—"

"Then you are guilty."

"He is—he is!" cried the housemaid. "He was here this evening, but went away at six. Sir Simon said he would see him after ten. Oh, Bernard, how could

ANNEXED
MAY 10 1894

you!" sobbed Jane. "To think I should have been mixed up with a man as 'ull be put in the Chamber of Horrors!"

"Policeman, let me go," said Gore, "if you are sure there is some mistake."

"The magistrate will decide that. You'll be here in a week, soon, and then you'll be lodged in jail."

"Mrs. Gilroy," cried the young man, "I am innocent. I am innocent with horror, "you know I am innocent."

"No," she said fiercely, and with a look of defiance on her face. "You came to see Sir Simon, and you waited below for him. You waited for him in my parlour. I waited below for Sir Simon, and you left fifteen minutes before he came upstairs to see my master. He was murdered. He was murdered. I ran out calling murder, and you were on the door-step."

"I had only just come."

"Come back, you mean," said the policeman.

"To see if poor master was murdered."

"Oh, Bernard—Bernard!"

"You'll kill him! Lor'! that I would if I could!"

"Hark!" said Mrs. Gilroy. "The carriage is here. Drive away—drive away—drive away."

"That is a trick—a trick!"

"Lucy is upstairs. I must go. I must go. Drive away. She can't see me."

"Drive away, drive away, drive away," said Mrs. Gilroy, recovering from her first shock.

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by three or four policemen who were tramping hurriedly along in the wake of the breathless page. At once they realized the situation, and plunged into the fog after the flying form of the soldier. The page followed also, but speedily returned with the news that the fugitive was running towards High Street.

"He's bound to be caught," said Mrs. Gilroy.

"I hope not," said Beryl, who was standing in the hall much disturbed. "After all, he is my cousin."

"And a murderer," added the housekeeper. "Wait here, policeman."

"But he's got away," said the officer, considerably ruffled by the escape. "I must follow."

"The others are after him," said Julius, drawing him back. "You can't follow in the fog. It's thicker than ever. Mrs. Webber."

"Oh, what's the matter?" asked a trembling voice, and a white face appeared at the window of the carriage which stood at the door. "Mr. Beryl!"

"Sir Simon has been murdered by his grandson," said Julius, running down the steps and speaking quietly.

Mrs. Webber threw herself back into the carriage and shrieked, "Oh, horrible! Drive away—drive away."

"No! no!" said Beryl, anxiously. "Lucy is upstairs with the corpse. Come and take her away. She can't remain here."

"Yes, I know," said Mrs. Webber, recovering from her momentary alarm, and getting hastily out of the carriage. "James, where is Francis?"

"He's gone off after the murderer, mum," said

James, touching his hat; "but for the 'orses I'd have gone also."

"Wait—wait," said Mrs. Webber, hurrying up the steps. "How terrible—poor Sir Simon. Where is the body?" she asked, shuddering.

"In the sitting-room on the first floor," said Mrs. Gilroy.

"Where the red light is?" asked the lady.

"There is no red light," said Mrs. Gilroy.

"But I tell you there is," said Mrs. Webber. "I saw it when I heard the horrid cry of murder."

"The red light," said Julius, starting. "I wonder"—he hurried outside and looked up to the dark front of the house. "There's no red light, Mrs. Webber," he called out.

"I knew there wasn't," cried Mrs. Gilroy, sitting down, evidently exhausted. "You must be mistaken, ma'am."

Mrs. Webber ran out also. "I am not mistaken. Why"—she stared up also—"there is none. Yet I am sure—I'll ask Lucy," and she ran into the house again. "Come and show me where the poor man is."

This was to Mrs. Gilroy, who rose slowly and walked heavily up the stairs. "Are you in pain, Mrs. Gilroy?" asked Julius, who followed.

"Yes," she muttered, pressing her hand to her side. "Mr. Gore gave me a wrench when I struggled with him. My poor master," and sighing heavily, she panted up the stair.

In the room, Lucy was kneeling beside the dead, with the tears streaming down her cheeks and holding the limp hand. "How terrible it is!" she sobbed. "He was so well and bright when I left to go to the

theatre, and now"—she broke down. Julius supported her to the sofa and strove to calm her.

"It is terrible," he said soothingly. "I think you had better go back with Mrs. Webber."

"No!" she said, drying her eyes. "I will wait here."

"Yes, do, miss," chorussed the cook and the housemaid, who were both in a state of wild alarm.

"Nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Webber, laying her hand on the girl's shoulder. "Come home with me, dear."

Mrs. Webber was a small, dark, stern-looking little woman with a high color, although her face was very white at the present awful moment. She was possessed of considerable determination, as could be seen from her firm mouth. But Lucy, in spite of her youth and the crushing to which she had been subjected by Sir Simon, had the stronger will, and positively refused to leave the house.

"He was my only friend," she said, rising, "and I won't go away."

"You can do nothing, dear," said Julius, quickly.

"I can help the nurse with the body," she answered. "Don't say another word, Julius. My post is here. Send for someone at once to lay out the body, unless you—" She looked at Jane and the cook.

These cowards shrieked simultaneously, and with one accord fled to the lower regions, where they sat up for the rest of the night drinking strong tea, and discussing the tragic event with the gusto peculiar to their class. The policeman joined them here later, and asked after the courting of Jane.

Meantime Mrs. Webber, finding all remonstrance

vain, had departed. Mrs. Gilroy remained alone with the dead body, and Julius, leading Lucy to another room, answered the inquiries of an inspector who had appeared on the scene. He noted all replies made, and explained that the fugitive had not yet been caught. "And I don't know if he will be," added Inspector Groom, shrugging his shoulders; "the fog is thick."

"And Bernard is very quick," said Lucy, sipping a glass of wine which she sorely needed. "Oh, I hope he'll get away!"

"Very natural," said Groom, nodding. "You don't want the scandal."

"I don't want Bernard hanged," said Miss Randolph.

"Ah! Then you think he is guilty."

"Mrs. Gilroy says he is," answered the girl, sobbing, "and I know Bernard was on bad terms with Sir Simon. Julius, perhaps after all Bernard may be innocent."

"I hope so," said Beryl, dubiously; "but according to Jane, Bernard has been hanging round the house for the last fortnight, and——"

"Ah!" said Groom, sharply, "hanging round the house, eh? I must speak to Jane. Who is she?"

"The housemaid. Bernard has been making love to her."

"I don't believe that is true," said Lucy."

"Young gentlemen do take strange fancies sometimes," said Groom, "and some housemaids are pretty."

Lucy's lip curled. "Jane is not pretty," said she, decidedly, "and Bernard is far too fastidious a man to lower himself in that way."

"Well, the long and the short of it is, that he has been hanging round *the house*," put in Beryl, biting his

fingers impatiently. "Probably he came here this evening, and saw Sir Simon in answer to the signal of the Red Window."

"The Red Window!" echoed Lucy.

"Yes. You told me about the signal this evening."

"But I did not place a lamp in any window, and there is no Red Window here. Had I done that to attract Bernard, I should have told you."

"I don't think you would," said Beryl, with a significant expression; "but the fact remains, Mrs. Weber saw the Red Window."

"You did not."

"No. But a piece of red stuff may have been used to make the light, and then removed."

"Mrs. Gilroy may know about it."

But Mrs. Gilroy, when questioned, did not. She never knew anything about a red light. Sir Simon had expressed the wish to see the soldier, and had sent down to the kitchen before six. "He was then having tea with Jane."

"Did you see him?" asked the inspector.

"No. Had I done so I should have recognized him. But he always got out of the place when he heard me coming. Once he was concealed in a cupboard. On receiving Sir Simon's message sent by the page, he left the house——"

"Yes," interrupted Lucy. "I remember the message being brought back."

"And then he came after ten," went on Mrs. Gilroy. "I opened the door to him. He asked to see his grandfather."

"He was this man, then?" asked Groom.

"*Mr. Bernard Gore?* Yes, he was. He went to

see the old gentleman, and I waited below. Then he left the house——”

“Did you let him out?”

“No. He went away quickly. Wondering at the length of the interview, I ran up the stairs and found Sir Simon dead. I came out at once, and found Mr. Gore almost on the doorstep——”

“Mr. Gore?” asked the inspector, looking up.

“Yes. Mr. Bernard Gore, the grandson of Sir Simon.”

“And my cousin,” said Julius. “You say he was at the door?”

“He was, Mr. Beryl. I made him come up the stairs and”——she made a gesture——“you know the rest.”

Groom put the housekeeper through a thorough examination, and noted down her replies. She told a consistent story. Then he questioned Julius and Lucy regarding the quarrel between the deceased and his grandson. Finally he proceeded to the kitchen and questioned the servants. The result of these inquiries was that Inspector Groom left the house—with a policeman in charge—firmly persuaded of Bernard’s guilt. All the evidence pointed to his committal of the crime. Groom was not ill-pleased. He thought he had secured a case likely to cause a sensation, and to prove remunerative to himself.

While the rope to hang the unfortunate young man was being woven, the outcast—for he was nothing else now—was racing through the fog. After the first plunge into the gray mist, he succeeded in shaking off the officers—all save one. This was a young fellow, quick on his legs. *He followed Bernard towards the*

High Street, as had been reported by the page, who had seen the two dark forms shooting past him. Only a yard or two lay between pursued and pursuer, and Gore, in spite of all his efforts, could not increase the distance. But he was determined not to be taken. Undoubtedly he had been drawn into a trap, and howsoever innocent he was, it might be impossible to prove that he was guiltless in the face of the enmity of Mrs. Gilroy and Julius. Also, there was the evidence of Jane to be reckoned with, and she was doubtless a tool in the hands of her superiors. Bernard wanted to gain a place of refuge, so that he might think over his position and communicate with Durham and Conniston. They might be able to help him in this dilemma.

It was impossible to remain in the High Street, seeing that every moment he ran a chance of falling into the arms of a policeman. He therefore turned down a side street and raced through Cheniston Gardens. His pursuer, still close on his heels, followed, and by this time another officer had joined. Bernard made up his mind and ran for the river. He crossed Cromwell Road, Fulham Road, sped through Elm Park Gardens, and down to Chelsea. Many were after him by the time he reached the river's bank. Only one chance remained. He plunged into the stream and the fog covered his retreat.

"It's all up," said the policeman, who heard the plunge. "He'll be drowned."

CHAPTER VI

A MAIDEN GENTLEWOMAN

“Hurseton, in Essex, lies about ten miles from the coast, and is elevated on a wide plateau whence can be obtained a fine and picturesque view of the famous marshes. It is a quaint, old-world village, gathered round an ancient Saxon Cross, which occupies the centre of the village green. The church—eleventh century—is dedicated to St. Peter, and is, for the most part, sunken in the ground owing to its antiquity. The tower and spire are of wood. Many of the gentry have country seats in this popular vicinity. The rising watering-place of Market-on-Sea, five miles distant, is much frequented by Londoners during the holiday season. Hurseton can be reached from town by rail a little over the hour.”

So far the guide-book; but the above-mentioned gentry referred to therein were not at all pleased by the advertisement, as many of the cheap trippers came to visit the place from Market-on-Sea, and by no means improved the countryside with their rowdy manners. Miss Berengaria Plantagenet was especially wrathful at the yearly plague of sightseers, and would have put them all in jail had she been able. She was a dignified old lady, small in stature, with a withered rosy face, white hair, and eyes as keen as those of a robin, if not so shallow. Her mansion—so she called it—stood at *the end of the village, a little way back from the long,*

straight road which ran towards the coast and the marshes. But the term mansion was rather a misnomer. The place had originally been a small farmhouse, and Miss Berengaria—as she was usually called—had added to it considerably, so that it formed an irregular pile of buildings, all angles and gables, sloping roofs and stacks of twisted chimneys. Some of it was thatched, a portion was covered with mellow red tiles, and a kind of round turret, quite out of keeping with the rest of the building, was slated. Every species of architecture was represented in “The Bower,” and the name did not fit it in the least. But Miss Berengaria had dwelt in it for forty years—ever since she had been disappointed in love—and, being a lady of singularly independent character, she gave the house its odd appellation. The low pile of buildings—for the most part of these did not exceed one story in height—looked quaint and queer, but then Miss Berengaria was queer herself.

Every morning she could be seen in her garden snipping and picking and clipping and scolding. The gardens were divided from the highroad by a low hedge of holly and hawthorn, carefully trimmed, and presented a pleasant spectacle of lawn and flower-beds. In summer the place was gay with cottage flowers, for Miss Berengaria, being old-fashioned herself, would have no new-fangled importations. The flowers she loved were snapdragon, sweet-william, heart’s-ease, and all those homely blossoms such as John Bunyan loved. The house was covered with virginia creeper, wistaria and ivy, and through the thick growth peeped the *latticed windows* under heavy eyebrows of gray thatch. *It might have been a cottage out of a fairy tale for*

quaintness; and its mistress might have been a fairy herself in stature and oddity. The villagers liked her, though she was rather dreaded.

“A sharp old lady,” said the host of the Conniston Arms, “and quite the lady, bless you! though she do keep fowls and ducks and though she do sell her fruit. She looks like a gipsy by way of dress in the day, but when she claps her diamonds on at night, bless you! she’s as grand as the queen herself.”

This report was perfectly true. Miss Berengaria always dressed—as she put it—anyhow during the day; but at night she appeared in silver gray silk covered with costly lace, and wearing jewels of great value. She had a weakness for jewels, and had many, which she wore every evening. People hinted that she would be robbed, as the cottage was situated in rather a solitary position, and a quarter of a mile from the village. But Miss Berengaria was a stout-hearted old lady and laughed such ideas to scorn.

As it was now winter, Miss Berengaria was attired in a wincey dress with a tartan shawl, and wore rubber boots on her feet and large gardener’s gloves on her hands. Having finished clipping and pruning—she kept no gardener, saying she knew more than a trained professional—she tripped round to the back of the house, where a colony of fowls, pigeons, ducks, turkeys and geese welcomed her coming with much noise. Her hobby—amongst others—was fowl-farming, and she gave up a large portion of her time to rearing and fattening birds for the market. As her income was five thousand a year there was no need for her to work so hard, but she was out at all times and in all weathers attending to her feathered pets. A particularly ugly

bull-dog, called Sloppy Jane, accompanied her. Miss Berengaria did not approve of the name, but the dog would answer to no other, so it had to be adopted. Sloppy Jane was devoted to her mistress and to Alice. While Miss Berengaria was feeding the fowls and wondering when the gong would sound for breakfast, Alice came out with a paper in her hand. She was a tall, slim girl with a fair face and brown eyes and hair. Not particularly pretty, perhaps, but with such a sweet expression and such a charming disposition that young men fell in love with her on the spot. Nor after a closer acquaintance did any see fit to change their opinions. Had Sir Simon seen her he might have approved of Bernard's choice, but there being a standing quarrel between the old baronet and Miss Berengaria, on the rights of a footpath, the old man had never come near "The Bower" for years. The old gentlewoman, in spite of a rather sharp manner, was fond of Alice, and Miss Malleson was devoted to her. The morning was sharp and cold, but there was a blue sky and occasional glints of sunshine. "And I shouldn't wonder if we had snow," said Miss Berengaria, looking up. "Perhaps a snowy Christmas. Ah, we had them when I was a girl. But there! the weather's deteriorated like everything else."

"Aunt," said Alice, in a faint voice—Miss Berengaria always liked to hear the name, although she was no relative—"Aunt!"

At the sound of the faint voice the old dame wheeled round—she was active in spite of being eighty years of age—and uttered an exclamation on seeing the white *face* of the girl. Alice was deathly pale and, clinging *with one hand* to some wire netting, held a newspaper

in the other. "What's the matter, child? Anything wrong?"

"Bernard?" gasped Alice. "Oh, Bernard! Bernard!"

"This must be looked into," said Miss Berengaria, using her favorite expression. "Something is wrong with that silly boy. What's he been doing, child? It must be something bad if it's in the paper."

"I don't believe he did it," said Alice, trembling. "He is innocent."

Miss Berengaria trembled also and sat down. "Don't hint at horrors, Alice," she said, with an effort at self-command. "I'm not fit for such things. I don't suppose the boy's killed anyone—though, to be sure, as he's a soldier now, it's his trade."

"Murder!"

"Eh! What's that? Murder, Alice!" The old lady's ruddy cheeks grew white, and she stretched out her hand for the paper. "Show me!" she said resolutely.

Alice did not hand her the paper. She seemed almost incapable of understanding what was said.

"Bernard is dead!" she moaned.

"Dead! Great Heavens!"

"He is drowned. It's all in the paper. It's all—Oh—oh!"

Breaking off suddenly she dropped the paper, and fled towards the house like a creature suddenly aroused to life. Miss Berengaria did not lose a moment. With an activity wonderful in a woman of her years she sprang to her feet, and hurried up the path round to the front of the house, following in the wake of the weeping girl. She saw Alice disappear into the porch

and enter the breakfast-room, where the meal was already waiting. There, on the hearth-rug, Alice fell prone. Miss Berengaria knelt down and took her hand. She had not fainted, but, cold and shivering, was sobbing as though her heart would break. And perhaps it would, under this unexpected and terrible calamity. Bernard was her idol, and now he was dead, and his memory fouled with the accusation of an awful crime.

Finding that Alice still had her senses Miss Berengaria nodded and sat down. "The best thing for you, my dear," she said in a soft voice. "Weep your heart out, while I read the paper."

These words sound rather heartless, but the old lady did not intend them to be so. She realized that tears would relieve the strain on the almost stunned girl, and welcomed them gladly. Alice knew that her friend spoke for the best, but she gave no sign as, lying prone on the rug, she concealed her agonized face, while Miss Berengaria adjusting her spectacles, glanced through the paper. Already the gong had sounded, the meal smoked on the table, and there was no fear of interruptions by the servants. But neither Miss Berengaria nor Alice was able to eat in the face of this bolt from the blue.

"Where is it, my dear?—oh, here! Murder and Suicide. A nice heading, upon my word. Rubbish! I don't believe a word of it."

"Read! Read!" moaned the girl at her feet.

"Alice," said Miss Berengaria, severely, "before reading a word I tell you that I don't believe a word of it. Bernard, though a silly boy, would not kill a fly, nor would he kill himself. Murder and Suicide! Oh, *rubbish—rubbish!*"

"But you know, and I know, he quarrelled with his grandfather."

Miss Berengaria looked at the girl's white face as she half crouched, half sat on the rug, with her eyes wild and her brown hair in disorder.

"I don't see what Sir Simon has to do with it," said she, tartly.

"He is dead."

"Dead!"—Miss Berengaria shivered. "You don't mean to say that."

"Read! Read! Everything is against him—everything. Oh, how can I bear my life? How can I live?"

"Alice," said the old dame again, although she was very white, "if this lying paper means to say that Bernard murdered Sir Simon, I tell you again that I don't believe a word of it. You, who love him, ought to believe in his innocence."

"But the evidence."

"A fig for evidence. Circumstantial evidence has hanged an innocent man before now. Bernard Gore kill that old tyrant——?"

"Hush! He is dead!"

"And so we are to speak well of him," snapped Miss Berengaria. "Oh, well"—she rubbed her nose—"we'll tell lies about him like the majority of tombstones do of those who lie below, but I tell you, foolish girl that you are, Bernard did not kill the old man, nor did he kill himself."

"But the paper says——"

"I don't care what the paper says," said Miss Berengaria, resolutely. "No, indeed. I am a better judge of character than any paper. That poor boy was vilely treated by *that—there!* there! I won't say a word

against Sir Simon. He's dead, and we must be lenient. But Bernard Gore is innocent. Before I read I tell you that."

"I hope it may be so," cried Alice, clasping her hands.

"It is so," said the other, sharply and in a truly feminine way. "All I know is that Sloppy Jane adored him, and she's not the dog to adore anyone who would shed blood."

Alice could not but see that this reasoning was not based on facts. But, all the same, ridiculous though it was, she derived a certain comfort from it. Miss Berengaria, who had been thus optimistic to quieten the poor girl, nodded, when Alice took a seat in the opposite chair more composed, and addressed herself to mastering the facts of the case. Alice, with clasped hands, stared at the old lady as she read silently but with frequent raising of her eyebrows and sometimes a sniff. The paper stated that Sir Simon and his grandson, Bernard, were enemies, that the young man, having been hanging round the house for a fortnight courting the housemaid, had secured an interview with the elder when Miss Randolph was at the theatre. He had evidently quarrelled with Sir Simon, and, having chloroformed him, had quietly strangled him with his own handkerchief, after which he left the house. Then followed an account of the pursuit and failure to capture Gore. "He escaped the officers by plunging into the river," said the journal. "Next morning his khaki coat and hat were found on the opposite bank, so doubtless he got rid of them when attempting to swim. But what, with the cold and the fog, undoubtedly he must have succumbed to the force of the current." Finally

the paper stated that an inquest would be held within two days on the dead body. At the conclusion of this somewhat bald article, Miss Berengaria gave a short laugh and threw down the paper. "I don't believe a word of it," she said, folding her arms, "and I'm going up to London."

"What for, aunt?"

"To see into the matter myself. I believe that Beryl creature is responsible for the whole thing."

"But see," said Alice, picking up the paper, "he was at the theatre with Lucy and a Mrs. Webber."

"I don't care. Failing Bernard, Julius comes in for the money."

"He comes in for it even without that," said Alice, bitterly. "Don't you remember that Sir Simon disinherited Bernard because he would not give me up? I implored Bernard, for his own sake, to break our engagement, but he refused. He gave up all for me, and now he is dead—dea—dead. Oh," sobbed Alice, "how unhappy I am!"

"How foolish you are," said Miss Berengaria, her eyes hard and bright. "Do you think a man, who could act towards you in so noble a way, would commit a cowardly murder, and then shirk the consequences? Not at all. I'm ashamed of you. I once loved," said the old lady, rising and marching energetically about the room, "and my lover was a fool and a villain. Bernard is neither. He is a fine fellow, God bless him and bring him safely out of this trouble! He shall have my help—yes, my best help," added Miss Berengaria nodding.

"But he is dead."

"He is not dead, you weak-minded, silly, hysterical

girl. That sort of man has as many lives as a cat. He's alive, to vindicate his reputation and to bring home the crime to the real assassin."

"But who can that be?" asked Alice, comforted by this assurance.

"I don't know," said Miss Berengaria, taking a seat at the table. "Come and pour out my coffee, and eat."

Alice dragged herself to the table and took up the silver pot. "I can't eat," she said faintly.

"Yes, you can; and, what's more, you're going to. No nonsense with me, miss. You and I have a hard task before us."

"What is that?"

Miss Berengaria laid down her knife and fork with which she was about to carve a piece of bacon. "Well, I am astonished," she said, glaring. "In my young days a girl in love would have been ashamed to make such a speech. Why, bless me! haven't we got to prove Bernard's innocence?"

"Will that bring him to life?" said Alice, bitterly.

"It would, if it were necessary; but it isn't. Bernard's in hiding."

"Can you be sure?"

"Alice Malleon," said the resolute old dame, "if you were younger I would shake you and send you to bed on bread and water. You don't deserve to be loved by such a man. He gave up all for you, and you believe the worst of him."

"Bernard has a temper, and he might have—"

"But he didn't. I know he has a temper. I admire *his temper*. I saw him thrash a tramp for throwing *away a loaf of bread*, and that warmed my heart

towards him. Had I married the villain I didn't marry, and he hadn't been such a villain as he was, I would have had a son just like Bernard—perhaps two or three. Dear! dear, what a loss to the British Empire that I never married.”

In spite of her grief Alice could not help smiling at this way of putting things. But certainly Miss Plantagenet was right. Had she been a mother, her dauntless nature was of the sort that would have bred brave sons for the motherland. The old lady was one of those strong people always to be relied upon in time of calamity. The worse the trouble the quicker Miss Berengaria rose to the occasion. She prided herself on facing facts, alleging that only in this way could things be settled. At the present moment she acknowledged silently to herself that things looked black against Bernard Gore and that he really might be dead for all she knew. But to Alice she refused to admit these thoughts.

“This must be looked into,” she said energetically, “and I am going up to town to see about the matter. When I have heard the evidence at the inquest I'll know how to shape my course.”

“What will you do?” asked Alice, brightening under this optimism.

“When acquainted with the facts,” said Miss Berengaria, rolling up her napkin, “and when I have formed my theory—”

“Your theory, aunt?”

“Yes! My theory as to who murdered the old—Well, it's Sir Simon I mean—we must be lenient to his memory. But when I have formed my theory I'll see a *detective* and place the matter in his hands. I shall

CHAPTER VII

BERNARD'S FRIENDS

The report of the murder caused great excitement in London. It seemed terrible that so old a man, and a titled man at that, should be murdered in his own house and by his profligate grandson. The general opinion was that Bernard should not only be hanged, but drawn and quartered, as his crime amounted to parricide. But this vengeful demand was made only by the extreme people, and the newspapers were on the whole very fair in their statements. Although it seemed quite certain that young Gore was guilty, yet the journals gave him the benefit of the doubt. Not till after the inquest did any newspaper venture to state that the man had really committed the crime. But this was as it should be, if the fair play instinct of the English race is to be lived up to.

Durham attended the inquest as Sir Simon's lawyer and executor, and Miss Plantagenet attended it with him. She saw the solicitor only for a few minutes and they had little time to exchange opinions. But Durham assured Miss Berengaria that he was certain Bernard was innocent, upon which the old gentlewoman clapped him on the back. Her good opinion was strengthened at the inquest by the sturdy way in which the lawyer maintained this point.

Beryl was also present with Inspector Groom. He *looked pale and somewhat worried, and when his eyes*

fell on the withered, resolute face of Miss Berengaria, he winced, knowing she was a firm friend to his cousin. As yet the body of the young man had not been found, and both Durham and Miss Plantagenet were certain that Bernard was still alive. But the general opinion was that he had been drowned while escaping. Mrs. Gilroy was also present with Lucy, and these sat in the body of the court near Miss Berengaria. That old dame knew well that the housekeeper was no friend to the accused man, but she was not certain as regards Lucy. As Miss Randolph was engaged to Beryl, whom Miss Berengaria disliked heartily, she was prepared to think badly of the girl, going by the proverb that like draws to like. She therefore waited to hear Lucy's evidence before speaking to her, and although she was quite near her never turned her head to look or make any sign of recognition.

Inspector Groom, who was called first, detailed how he had been summoned in to see the dead body of the baronet, and related what evidence he had gathered, and gave also the names of the witnesses he proposed to call. Amongst these were Jane and the cook, also the page, for these three domestics had frequently seen the soldier who had courted Jane, and who was believed to be Bernard Gore. Durham, on the authority of Bernard, did not believe this, but he waited his time before contradicting the evidence.

After Groom came a doctor, who deposed to having examined the body, and gave it as his opinion that the deceased had been strangled some time after ten o'clock. Before being strangled he had been rendered unconscious by chloroform, thus had fallen an easy victim to the assassin. Mention was made of the bandana

handkerchief with which the strangulation had been effected, and it was produced in court; but the handkerchief steeped in chloroform which had been bound round the mouth was missing. It was a white one according to the evidence of the housekeeper, and had been loosened from the mouth by Bernard himself when she brought him up to look on his victim. Groom expressed annoyance at this, as the handkerchief was an important piece of evidence. Being white it could not have belonged to the deceased, who used only colored bandana handkerchiefs. Therefore it was probable that the assassin had used his own, and the name on the corner would have settled the question beyond doubt. But the handkerchief was lost, and there was no more to be said. Groom hoped to prove Gore's guilt by the evidence of his other witnesses.

Julius Beryl deposed that Bernard and Sir Simon were at variance, and Mrs. Gilroy gave evidence about the quarrel which had taken place at the Hall when the young man had been turned away. She swore that Bernard then made use of threatening language and had hinted he would throw his grandfather out of the window. She also explained the cause of the quarrel and the name of Alice was mentioned, much to the wrath of Miss Plantagenet. Afterwards the housekeeper went on to state that Bernard had visited in Crimea Square. She had never seen him, as he was always smuggled out of sight by Jane when she was heard approaching the kitchen. But on the night of the murder Gore had presented himself at the door after ten o'clock and had intimated that Sir Simon *desired* to see him, having sent down a message to the kitchen to that effect.

Coroner: "Who carried the message?"

Mrs. Gilroy: "The page, William. Mr. Gore was alarmed and left the house at once, refusing to come up. Afterwards he had apparently changed his mind, for he came to the door. I took him up to Sir Simon and left them alone."

Coroner: "Did you see the meeting?"

Mrs. Gilroy: "No. I pushed Mr. Gore into the room then went down to wait. But I think Sir Simon was disposed to be friendly. Mr. Gore remained upstairs for about fifteen minutes, then left the house hurriedly. I saw him go out of the door. I called after him. He did not answer. I then ran upstairs, and found Sir Simon dead. I came down again and ran out in pursuit of Mr. Gore, crying out, 'Murder!' He was almost on the doorstep and came into the house with me. He denied that he had killed his grandfather and loosened the two handkerchiefs. Then the police came and he escaped."

She persisted in her statements, and said calmly that young Gore had certainly killed the old man. At the interview at the Hall, she had heard him use the word "strangle," and Sir Simon had been murdered in that way.

Lucy Randolph also gave evidence as to the quarrel. "Bernard had a fiery temper," she said, weeping, "and when Sir Simon spoke badly of Miss Malleson, he threatened to throw Sir Simon out of the window. I did not hear him use the word strangle. I never saw him when he came to the kitchen at Crimea Square, and it was only two days before the murder that Mrs. Gilroy recognized him by the description given by the housemaid. I am quite friendly with Bernard."

This evidence led to that of Jane, the housemaid. She was shown a photograph of Gore and swore positively that it was the face of the young soldier who had courted her. Before Sir Simon came to Crimea Square she had met him in the Park. He was in the uniform of the newly-formed Imperial Yeomanry. He made love to her, and asked if he might come to the house. He also seemed to be very inquisitive about Sir Simon. He came many times, and was introduced to the cook. Also William, the page, saw him. He called himself Bernard, nothing more, and did not make use of his name of Gore. Whenever Mrs. Gilroy was heard coming he always hid himself. He seemed afraid to meet her. Both witness and cook connived at the concealment as they feared the rebuke of the housekeeper. On the night of the crime a message came from Sir Simon by the page, William, asking Bernard to step upstairs. He displayed great alarm, and went away at once, saying he might return to see Sir Simon after ten. Witness gave other evidence, but the important point was, that she identified the photograph as that of Bernard Gore. Also the name was the same.

The cook and the page also identified the photograph as that of Mr. Gore. Evidence was then given by an officer of the Imperial Yeomanry as to Gore calling himself Bernard alone. He was known as Corporal Bernard. On the night of the murder he had obtained leave of absence to dine with a friend and had left the barracks before five. It was between five and six, according to the cook, that Bernard was in the kitchen. Bernard, added the officer, was not expected back till close on midnight. Since then nothing had been heard of him.

Durham then stepped into the box and stated that Gore had dined with him at his house on Camden Hill. There was another mutual friend present. Bernard had arrived at seven at the house and had left it at ten o'clock. Witness produced Sir Simon's letter stating that Gore was courting the housemaid Jane. But Durham swore that Bernard had denied this, and said that he had not been near the house. "Indeed," added the witness, "he did not know the whereabouts of the house till I told him."

Coroner: "Then he must have gone from your house direct to Crimea Square."

Durham: "I can't understand why he should do so. He had no intention of going, and certainly he had no idea of killing Sir Simon. I am quite convinced that he is innocent."

This expression produced incredulous smiles, as by this time everyone present was certain that Gore was the culprit. Thanks to Durham's representations Dick West (*alias* Lord Conniston) was not called. It is needless to say that the real name of this witness was not known. Had it been public the Coroner would have doubtless insisted on his production, if only to swell the scandal of the case by the addition of a title.

In summing up the Coroner was quite on the side of the prosecution and public opinion was with him. He pointed out that the evidence of the cook, the housemaid, the page and the officer all showed that Bernard Gore and Corporal Bernard were one and the same. Also there was the evidence of Mrs. Gilroy, who opened the door at ten o'clock to the man himself. Without doubt Gore was the person who had called to see his grandfather. As to the motive for the com-

mission of the crime, the jury could see for themselves that there was a strong one. Mr. Beryl's evidence showed that a bitter quarrel existed, and this was confirmed both by Miss Randolph and Mrs. Gilroy. Even the word "strangled" had been used, and in that way Sir Simon had met with his death. Without doubt Gore, furious at being disinherited, had called to see Sir Simon, to see if he could be reinstated. Doubtless, as both had fiery tempers, a quarrel had taken place, and then the younger man, having rendered the older one unconscious by means of chloroform, had murdered him. It was certainly inexplicable that he should have returned to the house, but then the jury must take into consideration that perhaps Gore thought such a bold course might prove his innocence. Finally, his escape showed that he was guilty, as had he been an innocent man, he would have faced the matter out. It would seem that the criminal was dead. He had fallen into the hands of God, and thus had not escaped punishment. But on the facts before them the jury would have to give their verdict.

Biased both by the evidence and by the Coroner's speech, the jury brought in a verdict of guilty against Bernard Gore. Durham expected the verdict and so did Miss Plantagenet, but both of them, being Bernard's firm friends, felt a pang when they heard him thus condemned of wilful murder.

"Fools," said Miss Berengaria, as she drove back in her brougham with Durham to the office of the lawyer.

"I don't think that," expostulated Durham. "Under the circumstances the jury could hardly bring in a different verdict."

"*You know that Bernard is innocent,*" snapped the lady.

"Certainly! But on the evidence before them—"

"A fig for the evidence!" interrupted Miss Berengaria. "I go by my own knowledge of the boy. He wouldn't kill a fly."

"Ah! But you see, the men on the jury never met Bernard."

Finding the lawyer too strong for her, Miss Berengaria changed the subject, being determined not to acknowledge defeat. "Have you heard from young Gore?" she asked.

"No. He may be drowned for all I know."

"For all you know, and you know nothing."

"More's the pity, Miss Plantagenet. Did I know anything I might be able to satisfy myself that Gore is alive?"

"Of course he is alive."

"On what ground do you say that?" asked Durham, surprised.

"On the grounds of common sense. Bernard is not the man to die when his living is needed to prove his innocence."

This was so truly a feminine argument that Durham, with a shrug, held his tongue. "There's no more to be said," he remarked.

"I know that," snapped Miss Berengaria in a bad humor. "I am quite upset by all the rubbish those fools have been talking. What's to be done next?"

"I shall go down to Gore Hall and read the will."

"Ha!" said the old lady, brightly. "Can you do that until you are sure of the death of Bernard?"

"Yes. He may be dead after all—"

"He isn't, I tell you."

"Then it is all the better he should be thought to

are over my head. I quite expect that Bernard will communicate with Alice, and of course she will tell me. As Beryl will find that the money is left to—”

“I did not say that,” interrupted Durham, quickly, as the brougham stopped at the office door.

“To Bernard,” went on Miss Berengaria, coolly, “he will try and learn if he is dead or alive. If dead he will—no, I can’t say what he will do as I don’t know if the money, failing Bernard, is left to him. But if he thinks Bernard is alive he will hunt him down so as to get the money.”

Durham stepped out of the brougham rather afraid of the old dame. She was so clever that she seemed to read his most secret thoughts. He was glad the drive was at an end, and held out his hand to say good-bye. To his surprise and vexation Miss Berengaria stepped out at his heels. “I’m coming in to talk,” she said, and marched up the steps. I go down to-night to Hurseton, and I want to arrange what is to be done. Not a word, young man. I am Bernard’s friend and so are you. If we don’t combine it’s all up with the poor fool.” Durham followed the energetic lady with a feeling of helplessness, not knowing very well how to get rid of her. And he had particular reasons for not having her in the office. Conniston was coming to see him, and a meeting between him and his aunt might be productive of trouble. Not that Miss Plantagenet was his aunt, as she was only a distant relative. But she always styled herself so, and would answer to no other term. Durham regretted that he had accepted the lady’s offer to be driven to his office. But it was too late by this time, for Miss Berengaria was in the room. And in the room also sat Lord Conniston, now *out of uniform*, and looking much excited.

"Ha!" said Miss Plantagenet, not recognizing the young man, "and who is this?" She turned to Durham, who shot past her, making a sign of silence to his friend.

"A client of mine. Will you leave us for a moment, Conniston?"

The name slipped out before he was aware, and he could have stamped with vexation to see how quickly Miss Berengaria grasped the situation. With a grim smile she looked at the astonished young man. "So you are Dick," she said looking at him through a double eyeglass. "I haven't seen you since you made yourself sick in my garden. Bernard told Alice by letter that he met you. Where are you staying?"

"I don't understand," stammered Conniston, while Durham, giving up Miss Plantagenet as impossible, sat shuffling his papers.

"You ought not to be dense. Don't you remember me boxing your ears?"

Conniston burst out laughing. "Oh! by Jove! It's Cousin Berengaria."

"Aunt Berengaria," reproved Miss Plantagenet, giving him her hand. "I don't like league-long names. Come and sit down and tell me all about yourself."

"Miss Plantagenet," said Durham, hastily. "Lord Conniston and I have met to talk of Bernard."

"Then I'll form a third," said the old lady, sitting. "Dick—I shall call you Dick," she interpolated—"you are Bernard's friend, as his letter to Alice was all about you. Are you going to desert him?"

"No," said Conniston, taking her entirely into his confidence. "I have chucked the service to see him through *his trouble*."

“ Chucked what service ?”

“ The army. I was going to the front. But I’ll stop till I prove the innocence of Bernard, Aunt Berengaria.”

“ You don’t know that he is alive, Conniston,” said the lawyer.

“ Ah, but I do,” replied Dick. “ Here’s a letter from Bernard. He is safe and sound hiding at Cove Castle.”

CHAPTER VIII

BERNARD'S ENEMIES.

The deceased baronet was buried in the family vault under St. Peter's Church, with all the pomp of wealth. Sir Simon had never been popular, and had been known widely as a hard, gripping man. Yet his tragic fate, and a certain pity therefore, had drawn together a large concourse of people. Distant relatives who hoped to be mentioned in the will were present clothed in deepest black, although they cared very little for the dead. Julius, who already regarded himself as in possession of Gore Hall, was there with a long face and a satisfied heart. He was glad that he had inherited the wealth after which he had long hungered, and gladder still that his rival, Bernard, was dead with a stain on his name. In fancied security he moved along, not knowing what retribution was in store for him. Even the pitying angels must have laughed at his complacency.

Durham, as the solicitor and executor of the dead man, was present and directed operations. Conniston had gone to Cove Castle to see Bernard and hear his story; and Durham smiled as his eyes rested on the smug face of the presumed heir. There was no love lost between the two men, and Julius privately determined that, when in possession of the property, he would place the legal business in the hands of another solicitor. The young lawyer guessed somewhat of this, and smiled ironically as he thought how this spite would be *frustrated*.

From far and near people were gathered, for the murder had made a great stir. Everyone united in condemning Bernard, and not one person in the throng thought him innocent. Lucy was weeping alone at the Hall, with Mrs. Gilroy offering her such cold comfort as she could think of. For the girl was truly sorry for her cousin, although she believed him to be guilty. But her theory was that Bernard had been goaded into committing the rash act by the bitter tongue of his grandfather. It was a matter of disagreement between her and Julius that she should so mourn the downfall and death of Bernard. He reprovingly advised her to keep her tears for Sir Simon, from whose death both were likely to derive benefit. But Lucy, in spite of Beryl's evil influence, which had rather warped her better nature, persisted in weeping for the miserable cousin who had so suddenly been cut off in the midst of his wickedness. At least that—in the face of circumstances—was the view she took of the matter.

And Alice remained at The Bower, talking over the death with Miss Plantagenet. Her joy, when the old lady returned with the good news that Bernard was yet alive, had been painful to witness. She wished to go at once to Cove Castle, but this Miss Berengaria, by Durham's advice, would not permit. Suspicion might be excited, so it was decided that Conniston himself should visit his own castle, as that would seem a natural thing for him to do. The merest suspicion that Bernard was alive and in hiding would set the bloodhounds of the law on the trail, and Beryl would be the first to loosen them. Therefore, Alice waited at home with *Miss Berengaria* until the funeral was over. Then *they intended* to go to the Hall to hear the will read.

Miss Berengaria had some idea of the punishment that awaited Julius, and would not have been absent for half of her income. She detested the young man with all the virulence of her honest nature. And she insisted on Alice coming also, although the girl was unwilling. This again was by Durham's advice. He wanted both ladies to understand exactly how matters stood. It would save him the trouble of an explanation. And then, since he and the two ladies and Conniston were bent upon proving Bernard's innocence, Durham wanted all who could be spared—which did not include Conniston to be present, so as to daunt Bernard's enemies. Should Julius lose his temper over the will, it was probable that he might say something likely to afford a clue to the true assassin. And then Mrs. Gilroy was an enemy also, and she might be unguarded in her speech. Durham had a vague idea that both knew more than they admitted. As to Lucy, it was impossible to say whether she was friendly or hostile.

Sir Simon's body was duly interred, and he left all his wealth behind him to tak up his abode in the dark vault. After the service several people lingered in the graveyard, but the majority, thinking the spectacle was at an end, made haste to go. Julius with Durham returned in the carriage, and the rest of the relatives followed, flocking like vultures to the feast. While in the carriage Durham thought he would see if Julius suspected that Bernard had escaped.

"You have not heard if Gore's body has been found?" he asked.

"No," said Beryl, raising his pale eyes and looking as sad as any owl. "I fear he is dead in his sin."

"You *can't* be sure if he did sin, Mr. Beryl."

"*The jury thought so.*"

“A jury is not always infallible !”

“I think the case had a fair hearing, Mr. Durham. So far as I am concerned I should have been pleased had the verdict been otherwise. It is not pleasant for me to have a relative accused of such a crime. But since he is dead let his evil rest with him. You will not hear me say a word against his memory,” added the virtuous Julius.

“Perhaps it will be as well,” replied Durham, dryly. “You never were a friend of Bernard’s.”

“All the more praise to me that I should not run him down.”

“Tell me, Beryl, do you really believe he committed the crime ?”

“I answered that indirectly before. Yes, I believe he was guilty.”

“Then it is just as well he is dead.”

“Just as well,” asserted Beryl, quickly.

“You don’t think he can have escaped ?”

Julius started. “What makes you think so ?” he demanded uneasily.

“Well, you see, Bernard was a good swimmer, and—”

“The best swimmer in the world could do nothing against the current of the Thames on a foggy night. On a fine day I dare say he might have gained the opposite bank, but in the fog he must have circled round and round until he was exhausted.”

“Yet, his clothes were discovered on the bank,” persisted Durham. “I wonder if I offered a reward, would anything be discovered ?”

“His corpse might,” said Beryl, unpleasantly, “but no reward shall be offered. Better let sleeping dogs lie.”

"But surely, Mr. Beryl, if you inherit the property, you will seek for the poor fellow's dead body?"

"No," replied Julius decisively. "I think it is best to leave things alone. Bernard committed a vile act, and if his body has been swept out to sea all the better for his memory and the position of the family. I shall offer no reward."

Durham, seeing the young man was absolutely certain of his inheritance, and that he was prepared to act in a most niggardly spirit, looked out of the window to hide a smile. "Poor Sir Bernard," he said.

"Sir Bernard?" questioned the supposed heir, raising his eyebrows.

"Certainly. On the death of Sir Simon, Bernard took the title!"

"He hasn't enjoyed it long," said Beryl, with so villainous a sneer that the lawyer longed to pitch him out of the carriage, "and seeing he is dead I suppose the title becomes extinct."

"It does," assented Durham gravely. "Bernard was the only heir in the direct line."

Julius shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I'll be quite content with the money," said he.

"Here we are," said Durham, as the carriage stopped. "By the way, Miss Plantagenet and Miss Malleson have come to hear the will read. I hope you don't object."

"Yes, I do," retorted Beryl, angrily, as he alighted. "They would have shown better taste had they remained away."

"But remember Miss Malleson has lost Bernard."

"All the better for her. She would have had a miserable life with that fellow."

Durham suppressed a violent inclination to punch the man's head, but, knowing what punishment awaited him, he walked up the steps with a contemptuous smile. Here was a change indeed from the meek Julius of the old days. This presumed heir was obnoxious and insolent, thinking he was absolutely certain of entering into his kingdom. The lawyer was by no means a vindictive person, but it afforded him a certain amount of satisfaction when he thought of the irony of the situation.

However, when Julius reached the drawing room, in which those invited to hear the will read were assembled, he adopted a more conciliatory manner. Several relatives were present, and Mrs. Gilroy headed the servants at the end of the room. Miss Berengaria sat beside Alice in a recess somewhat screened by the window curtain. But Lucy was nowhere to be seen. However, when Durham took his seat at a small table and opened his bag, she entered in deep mourning. Julius went to meet her.

"Dear Lucy," he said, "we have buried our best friend."

Lucy made no reply, and, drawing her hand away, walked to where Alice was seated. She kissed the girl, whom Bernard had loved, in silence; and in silence was the kiss returned. Even Miss Berengaria, voluble as she was on all occasions, held her peace. She saw that Lucy was sincerely sorry for the loss of her cousin, and from that moment she entertained a better opinion of her. Alice drew Lucy into a seat beside her, and the two girls sat side by side, while Julius, already assuming the airs of a master, bade the company welcome.

"I am glad to see you all," he said in an important voice, "and I am sure that our deceased relative in his will has done all that his kind heart inspired him to do. Mr. Durham will now read the will."

When he sat down some of the relatives smiled at the phrase about a kind heart, for which the late baronet had been in no wise remarkable. Durham took no notice of Beryl's little speech, but opened the will and began to read. Julius listened with a complacent smile, which changed as the reading went on.

Legacies were left to nearly all the servants who had been with the testator a long time. Lucy became entitled to three hundred a year, and Mrs. Gilroy received one hundred. The sum allotted to her did not satisfy her, as she frowned when it was mentioned. Beryl's name was not mentioned, but he did not mind as he was waiting for the disposal of the residue of the estate. But when Durham read out that the estate had been left entirely to Bernard Gore, with the exceptions of the above-named legacies, he started to his feet.

"That is not the will!" he exclaimed loudly, and with a ghastly white face. "I am the heir."

"By a former will," interposed Durham, "or, rather, I should say, by a will which Sir Simon afterwards destroyed."

"He disinherited Bernard!" cried Julius savagely.

"No! the will—this will—which gives Mr. Gore the money was never cancelled."

"A new will was prepared leaving all to me. You read it to me yourself in your office and in the presence of Sir Simon."

"Quite so," rejoined the lawyer, smoothly folding

up the parchment; "but after you left, Sir Simon, refusing to execute that will, put it into the fire."

"It is a lie!"

"It is the truth," said Durham, his color rising. "I can bring forward my clerks who were to witness the new will, and they will state that it was never executed. Sir Simon changed his mind. The estate goes to Sir Bernard Gore, the new baronet, and as the executor of the will, I will take charge of all monies and of the property until he comes forward to claim them."

"But you know he is dead," said Julius, clenching his hand.

"I know nothing of the sort. He is supposed to be dead, but we must have proof of the death. A production of his body will be sufficient, Mr. Beryl," added Durham, cynically. "I think on your own account you had better offer that reward I spoke of."

"You have been playing the fool with me," said Julius, hardly able to speak for passion.

"No, I advised you what to do!"

"One moment," said a precise man who had not been mentioned in the will. "If young Gore really is dead—which I for one, hope is not the case—who inherits the money?"

"There is a codicil to that effect," said Durham, "which I had intended to read when interrupted by Mr. Beryl." He re-opened the parchment. "In it Sir Simon leaves the property to charity with the exception of any legacies. This in the event of Bernard Gore making no will. But the property has been left unreservedly to him, and, should he be alive, he has the power to will it to whomsoever he wishes."

"And if he is dead the property goes to a charity."

"Yes! I will read the codicil!" and this Durham did to the dismay of the company. Only Miss Berengaria chuckled. She was delighted to see that Beryl had been punished, and smiled when she thought how correct had been her guess when talking to the lawyer. As for Alice, remembering that Bernard was alive and well, she found it hard to contain her satisfaction that he had been fairly dealt with. Even the thought of the crime, under the ban of which he lay, faded for the moment from her mind. Julius, with a certain malignancy, brought it back to her recollection.

"Even if Bernard is not dead he cannot inherit as a felon," said he.

"Pardon me," interposed the lawyer. "You have yet to prove his guilt."

"It was proved at the inquest."

"A jury at an inquest has not the right to condemn a man," said Durham, sharply. "If Sir Bernard"—Julius winced at the title—"is alive and comes forward, I shall do my best to prove his innocence."

"And in any case," said Miss Berengaria in clear tones, "Mr. Beryl does not benefit."

Julius turned on her with fury, and seemed on the point of breaking out into wrathful speech. But his habitual dissimulation came to his aid, and he suppressed himself. More than that, he attempted to smile.

"I don't say that I do not feel hurt," he said, with a desperate attempt at cheerfulness. "Sir Simon distinctly named me as his heir, and, moreover, asked Mr. Durham to read the new will in which I was named as such."

"Perfectly true," said Durham, coldly. "But Sir

other servants, who then filed in an orderly manner out of the room. The relatives also took their leave, amongst them Julius, now smiling. At the door Lucy said something to him about Bernard. He smiled darkly.

“We have yet to prove that Bernard is alive,” he said.

“Danger !” thought Miss Berengaria. “I’ll watch you, young man.”

CHAPTER IX

AT COVE CASTLE

Five miles from Hurseton the marshes began and did not end until they touched the coast. There were acres of mud and reeds and succulent grasses, interspersed with narrow waterways. In rainy weather this low-lying land—if it could be called so—almost disappeared under water, and in summer the poisonous morass exhaled white mists which caused fever and ague. The people who dwelt on the border of the slough of despond were rarely healthy, but they were attached to the dismal neighborhood and refused to move to higher ground where they would have enjoyed better health. What was good enough for their fathers was good enough for them, was the argument upon which they based their refusal.

The road from Hurseton changed where the marshes began to a causeway and ran solid and high across the treacherous bog towards the coast. Here it took a sudden turn, and passed through several fishing villages on its way to Market-on-Sea. And thence between hedges it passed onward to London, a road once more. Some distance from the curve an arm of the causeway ran for a quarter of a mile to Cove Castle, which was built on a firm and elevated spot of ground, near a kind of estuary which communicated with the sea. The sea itself was only distant half a mile, and a fine view of it could be obtained from the castle. Why the

building should be called by so high-sounding a name, it is hard to say. It was simply a large stone house of two story, with a kind of tower at one end. Formerly, in the reign of Elizabeth, it had been a fort, and afterwards, falling into decay, had been used by smugglers for the storing of contraband goods. In the reign of George III., the then Lord Conniston being disgusted with life, and anxious to isolate himself from the gay world, in which he had glittered to the detriment of his purse and health, had brought the property and there had lived and died. At that time the family possessed several seats and a town house. But the Georgian Conniston preferred this unhealthy neighborhood, as least likely to attract his former friends. So no one visited him, and he lived and died a recluse. Afterwards the castle was deserted again, the successors of this lordly hermit preferring to live in more healthy parts. But gradually the property had been sold bit by bit, until, when Dick, the present lord, inherited, nothing remained to him but Cove Castle and the few acres around. Also he possessed the family vault, which was underneath the Church of St. Agnes at the village of Benstow, three miles away. It was strange that the members of the family should have decided to be buried in this lonely place, when they could have rested in some green churchyard in the Midlands. But, seeing that Cove Castle alone remained to their descendants, it was just as well that the former holders of the title had entertained this odd idea. The present Lord Conniston at least retained, out of the wreck of the property, the vault wherein the remains of his forebears were laid.

When Conniston arrived at the castle he was met at

the door by a gigantic female of uncommon ugliness, who answered to the name of Selina Moon. She was large enough to have earned an income by exhibiting herself in a caravan, being considerably over six feet, and sufficiently ugly to shame even the witches in Macbeth. Had Mrs. Moon lived in the Middle Ages, she would assuredly have been put to death for sorcery, as her looks seemed hardly human. She had the frame of a grenadier and the voice of a drill sergeant. Her face was large and round and pallid, from a long life in the midst of the marshes. A few grey hairs on her upper lip gave her a still more masculine look, and, indeed, the least observant would have taken her for a man in disguise. She wore a frilled cap, which surrounded her face like the rays of a sunflower, and wore a vivid red gown bound at the waist by a yellow scarf. Mrs. Moon loved bright colors, and apparently, if one could judge from her black eyes and beaked nose, had something of the gipsy in her. Not so far as wandering was concerned, though, for she rarely left the castle. This was because her great size, coupled with her love of finery, provoked comment from adults and insults from children whenever she ventured abroad.

This Amazonian female, from her height of six feet five, looked down on Conniston with a submissive air. She was as timid as a rabbit, the most harmless of her sex, and report went, that the late Mr. Moon, who had been almost a dwarf, had frequently beaten her in spite of her superior inches. However, the old man was dead, and for many a long day Mrs. Moon had lorded it over the one servant in the castle. But she still wore her submissive air, and when her master imperiously *demand*ed a sight of the gentleman who was *expecting him*, led the way at once to an upper room.

"But I wouldn't take everyone," said Mrs. Moon in a thin, high voice like the midnight wind in a chimney. "He being wishful to keep hisself quiet. What have he done, my lord?"

"Nothing," said Conniston, promptly. "He only came down here for a rest. Do you think he has robbed the bank?"

"There's worse things than robbing banks," remarked Mrs. Moon, shaking her frilled cap portentously, "and the worse things is what he's done. And why shouldn't he tell me his name if he was a babe for innocence?"

"Didn't he do so when he arrived?" asked Conniston, halting on the landing with an anxious look.

"No, my lord, bless your heart! he didn't," said the giantess; "and but that he had your letter, which was as plain as print——"

"And *was* print," interpolated Dick, remembering his caligraphy adapted to the brains of Mrs. Moon.

"I shouldn't have let him in. But your lordship said he was to have the best room, and the best room he has, to say nothing of your lordship's clothes, he having arrived in tatters like a tramp, which he isn't from the princely looks of him. No one knows as he is here, he having asked me to say nothing. But Victoria——"

"What about her?" asked Conniston, rather sharply, for Victoria was a small servant, preternaturally sharp and mighty curious.

"She's allays asking questions as to what he's doing here."

"Then, don't answer her questions."

"*I don't*," said Mrs. Moon, plaintively, "and but

that she's so strong I'd smack her hard. But only Jerry could manage her, and, bless me! your dear lordship, he's earning his bread in London, though I haven't heard of him for months."

"He's not in the place I obtained for him," said Conniston, stopping at the door of the room indicated by the housekeeper. "He's robbed the till and bolted."

Mrs. Moon was not all disturbed. "Just like his poor father, my second son," said she, shaking the frilled cap again. "He was a wonderful boy for money and never minded how he got it. Have they jailed Jerry?" she asked, with great simplicity.

Conniston could hardly help smiling at the calm way in which she took the report of her grandson's wickedness. "No, his master turned him out and gave him another chance."

"Bless and preserve your dear lordship, Jerry won't take no chance, as I always said, being advised by the cards. It's the gallers that boy will come to, and may I not be here to see him dangling at the end of a rope, much as he may deserve it. Jerry's a bad 'un, for sure, and takes after my old man's side of the family, several having been choked by the lawr for thieving and murdering and otherwise taking their enjoyment. Where is he now?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Moon. But if he comes here, don't you let him into the castle and don't you let him know that Mr.—Mr. Grant"—Dick gave Bernard a new name for the sake of concealment—"is here."

"Grant!" echoed Mrs. Moon. "But he don't look Scotch."

"*Never you mind what he is. You hold your tongue and make Victoria hold hers.*"

"Only Jerry can manage her," said Mrs. Moon, firmly, "me not being strong enough for such a tearing cat. If your lordship would speak yourself——"

"I'll see to it," interrupted Conniston, quickly. "I'm stopping here for the night, Mrs. Moon. Can you give me and Mr.—er—Grant a good dinner?"

"I'll cook it myself, Victoria being fond of burning things and her pastery being lead for heaviness. The wine your lordship knows——"

"Is there any of that port left?"

"Plenty, save what Jerry drank, he being fond of his glass."

"What! a boy of thirteen, Mrs. Moon!" said Conniston, seriously. "If you had stifled Jerry in the mud years ago it would have been better for him and for you."

Mrs. Moon blew a gigantic sigh. "True enough, your lordship, seeing as he'll occupy a place in the Chamber of Horrors in the exhibition me and Moon saw in London. Ah, well, some of his grandfather's people were hanged and——"

Conniston waited to hear no more of this domestic Newgate's Calendar, but abruptly opened the door and entered the room.

It was a large, airy apartment, with two windows looking on to the shining expanse of the sea, and well furnished in an old-fashioned way. In a large grate a fire of logs was briskly burning, so that the atmosphere was less damp than in the other rooms of the castle. The furniture was all of black oak, and included a square table, a comfortable sofa which was drawn up close to the fire, and several arm-chairs. Also there *was a sideboard* and a bookcase well supplied with vol-

umes of works long since out of print. The hangings were of faded brocade, and the carpet was patched and mended. Here and there was valuable china and a few silver ornaments. The whole room looked comfortable and home-like, and rather quaint in its faded and mellow beauty.

"Where are you, Bernard?" asked Conniston, seeing the room was empty.

For answer a window curtain was drawn aside and Gore came out, holding the heavy steel poker. "It's only you," he said, looking very pale. "I heard voices and concealed myself behind the curtain. I expected you, but didn't know but what someone else might come. That servant suspects me."

"Not Mrs. Moon," said Conniston, pitying the haggard looks of his friend.

"No, Victoria. She is as sharp as a needle and—"

"Don't distress yourself, old boy," said Dick, taking Gore's hand and leading him to the sofa upon which he had been apparently lying until startled by the sound of voices. "Mrs. Moon can be depended upon and I'll speak to Victoria myself. You are safe here."

"Are you sure, Dick?"

"Perfectly sure. And even if you were discovered I could manage to conceal you in the vaults below the castle."

"Are there vaults?" asked the fugitive, who was shivering and pale.

"Yes! The old smugglers used them to store goods and as hiding-places. There is a passage and door communicating with the arm of the sea which runs near the castle, and you could easily escape to foreign parts by means of a boat. Cheer up, old boy," added Dick, *clapping his friend on the back*, "you're not dead yet."

The poor, hunted young fellow threw his arm school-boy fashion over Conniston's shoulder. "What a good fellow you are, Dick!" he said. "I fancied you might believe me guilty."

"I'd as soon believe myself guilty, you several kinds of ass."

"And Alice?" asked Bernard, under his breath.

"She believes you innocent, so does Aunt Berengaria and Durham. Yes! and Miss Randolph also. She's a ripping girl that. I wish she wasn't engaged to Beryl, the pig!"

"What does he say?" asked Gore, warming his hand and casting a look over his shoulder.

"He says nothing, because he thinks you are drowned, as Mr. Peggotty would say. And, by Jove! Bernard, I thought you really were dead. You have no idea what a relief it was when I got your letter. How did you escape?"

Bernard passed his hand through his hair and sighed wearily. The strain through which he had passed, and from which he still suffered, showed itself in his bloodless cheeks and his wild eyes. At every sound he started and shook. His nerves, and small wonder, were quite unstrung, and even while sitting safely beside his old school chum on the sofa near the fire, he kept a tight hold of him, like a child by its mother's knee. Seeing this, Conniston rose quickly. Bernard was on his feet in a moment, startled by the suddenness of the movement.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, looking anxiously around, and eyeing both door and window suspiciously.

"You are the matter," said Conniston, touching the

bell. "I must get you some wine. You look so awfully ill, old chap. This will never do. I tell you, Bernard, you are all right. I'll stick to you through thick and thin."

"But if I was arrested?"

"You won't be arrested. Everyone thinks you are dead. You'll stay here until we sift this matter to the bottom, and then you can take your place again in the world as Sir Bernard Gore."

"Sir Bernard!"

"Of course. You inherit the title and the money also."

"Not the money, Dick?"

"Yes! Durham told me to tell you, as he couldn't come himself. He is now reading the will and Beryl will find himself left out in the cold. You get everything."

Bernard threw up his hands. "And I'm a hunted fugitive."

"Steady, old boy. Bit on the bullet. You're a dead man, and will remain one until we discover who killed your grandfather."

"And how can we——"

"Shut up, Bernard!" Conniston made an imperative sign as a knock came to the door. Gore at once turned his face to the fire and began to arrange the logs, while Lord Conniston spoke to a sharp, dark, wizen child who entered the room. She was no more than fifteen, but had such an old face and such a womanly appearance that she looked much older. Her eyes were as black as sloes and her thin lips tightly closed. A most unpleasant-looking creature with a waspish nature.

"Oh, Victoria," said Conniston, as this goblin

dropped a curtsey, "I want you to bring up some port wine.—Mrs. Moon will give it to you—and some glasses also."

"Yes, m'lord!"

"Bring a plate of biscuits too."

"Yes, m'lord!"

"And, Victoria," said the young man, as she retreated, "there is no need for you to mention that I have visitors at the castle."

"No, m'lord," said Victoria, and, with a glance full of suspicion at Bernard's back, she withdrew as noiselessly as she entered, and with a final curtsey, such as might have been made by a wooden doll. Indeed, Victoria—a most inappropriate name—might well have been cut out of wood, so stiff and angular and hard did she look. Conniston did not wonder that placid Mrs. Moon could not control this embryo virago. A combat between them would be like that between an elephant and a mosquito, with the betting on the insect.

"That's a mistake, Dick," said Bernard, when the door closed.

"What is?" asked Conniston, staring.

"Telling that girl to hold her tongue. She has no reason to suspect me, and quite as likely as not thought me merely your guest. Now she will fancy all sorts of things."

"I hope not," said Conniston, uneasily, "but she's such a little devil that I thought it best to give her one for herself. And if she chatters she will lose her situation. I am so afraid lest she should be in communication with Jerry."

"Jerry?"

"Judas. The grandson of Mrs. Moon who robbed

Taberley. He and Victoria were as thick as thieves, and are about equal in wickedness. If the girl suspected anything she might ask Judas to help her to learn more of the truth than we want known. Both would sell their nearest and dearest for a pound. But don't bother, Bernard," said the easy-going Dick, again crossing to the sofa, "everything is right."

"I hope so, I hope so," muttered Gore. "If I am arrested I cannot make any defence."

"We'll talk of that later. Here comes Mrs. Moon with the wine, and so speedily that I suspect she must have out a bottle for her private drinking. I say, Mrs. Moon," said Conniston, as the giantess entered with a silver tray and the wine, "don't let Victoria leave the castle on any account."

"I should think not," said Mrs. Moon, setting down the tray. "She works little enough as it is without trapesing about on holidays. I'd keep her under lock and key on bread and water if I had my way, and if she wasn't too strong for me, the besom that she is!—begging your dear lordship's pardon. Anything else, my lord?"

"No. You can go."

"And glad I am to go," said Mrs. Moon, withdrawing with a ponderous step, "being engaged in playing kings."

"Kings," said Conniston, when she vanished.

Bernard, in spite of his sadness, laughed and explained. "It's a game of patience," he said. "I asked Mrs. Moon for a pack of cards to pass the time, and was playing the game myself. She was curious; so, to keep her in a good temper, I taught it to her. Ever since she has been playing it unsuccessfully."

“ Oh! ” Conniston was not interested in his house-keeper’s games. He opened the bottle of port and carefully poured out a full glass, which he passed to Bernard. “ Drink that up, you sinner.”

Gore sipped a little wine but finally drank the whole glass. Conniston made him take another in spite of his protestations, and then the color came back to his sunken cheeks. The poor fellow was thin with anxiety and want of sleep. When Conniston saw he was better he made him light a pipe and then sat down to hear an account of his escape. Bernard was grateful for these attentions and began to look less cowed.

“ You’re a good friend, Dick,” he said, smoking luxuriously. “ This is the first moment of peace I have known since that awful moment.”

“ How did you escape? ” asked Conniston, lighting a cigarette.

“ I threw myself into the river and swam across.”

“ In the fog? ”

“ Yes. I was guided by the piers of the Chelsea Bridge. On the opposite side I took off my coat and hat and left them lying on the bank, so that it might be thought I was drowned.”

“ Which is exactly what people do think,” said Dick, complacently.

“ Thank Heaven for that. Well, then I went into a public-house I found open—it was not yet midnight—and made up a story about having been robbed and thrown into the river.”

“ That was dangerous. The public-house people might have advised you to see the police.”

“ I don’t think the landlord had any love for the *police*,” said Gore, dryly. “ He looked like an old con-

vict himself and displayed a fellow-sympathy. I don't know if he believed my story. However, for a sovereign he gave me a coat and hat, and asked no questions. I walked across Waterloo Bridge in the fog and escaped observation. But for the fog I expect my military breeches and leggings would have betrayed me and provoked questions. But I managed to escape."

"I didn't sleep at all. I walked the whole night, and by dawn I was out of London. I lost myself several times in the fog and twice had a row with a tramp or two. Then I took a train at a wayside station to Gravesend, and crossed the river to Tilbury."

"Didn't anyone ask questions?"

Bernard shook his head. "The new Yeomanry uniform wasn't known in those parts. I expect the gaiters made people think I was a farmer. I took the train to Pitsea, and then came on here under cover of night. It was ten o'clock by the time I got here."

"What did you do in the meantime?"

"I loafed about the taproom of a pub, and made out I was a horse-dealer buying horses for the war. No one suspected me, and I managed to sustain my part perfectly."

"Did Mrs. Moon admit you at once?"

"No. She was in bed. But when she came to the door she seemed disinclined to admit me. I produced your letter, and after she read it, which took about a quarter of an hour, she let me in. Then next morning I wrote to you."

"What made you think of this place, Bernard?"

"I could think of nowhere to hide," said Gore, leaning back with a weary sigh. "And after all," he added, with a *glance round*, "this is a very good *caché*."

Conniston nodded. "You are quite safe here. I will show you the way to the vaults, and should there be any chance of your being discovered you can hide there."

"Does Victoria know about the vaults?"

"I can't say. Probably that Judas brat has told her. He was brought up here, and knows every nook and cranny of the castle. And now, Bernard, we must have a good dinner, and then you can tell me whom you suspect of committing the crime."

CHAPTER X

A STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Bernard, *alias* Mr. Grant, had made free with Coniston's clothes, as Mrs. Moon had stated. But, being much taller than his friend, he looked rather uncomfortable, and indeed had hidden the shortcomings of the garments under a gorgeous dressing-gown, a relic of Dick's 'Varsity days. But Coniston had procured through Durham several suits of Gore's clothes which had been left behind at the Hall when he was turned away by his grandfather. These he had brought with him, and Bernard was glad enough to get into comfortably-fitting garments. These, and the society of Coniston, a good dinner and the super-excellent port made him feel a new man.

After dinner the two friends piled the fire with great logs as it was freezing hard without. Mrs. Moon brought up coffee hot and strong, and when she left the room the young men produced their pipes. Then Coniston sat on one side of the fire and Bernard on the other, and both of them prepared to go into the case and to see exactly how matters stood.

"In the first place," said Dick, filling his pipe carefully, "let us consider what actually happened. Sir Simon was alone that evening."

"He was when I found him dead, unless you call Mrs. Gilroy anyone."

"I call her a very important person," said Dick,

dryly. "I tell you what, Gore, you evidently don't know everything. Just tell me what you do know."

"I have told you," said Bernard, impatiently. "I left Durham's house at ten o'clock; you mentioned the time yourself."

"I did," responded Conniston, gravely, "and I mentioned also the day of the month. It was the——"

"The twenty-third of October. Shall I ever forget a date so ominous to me? I left the house, and a small boy stopped me. He said that a lady—he did not mention her name—had told him to inform me to follow him to the Red Window."

"Your cousin Lucy knew of that?"

"Yes. And I thought the lady in question was Lucy, but the boy did not mention any name. He simply said that he had been spoken to by the lady down Kensington way. Now I knew from Durham that Lucy was living with Sir Simon, who was in Crimea Square, Kensington, and that knowledge, coupled with the mention of the Red Window, made me follow the boy."

"Can you describe the lad?"

"Not very well. I caught a glimpse of him under a lamp-post, but the fog was so thick that I obtained only a vague impression. He seemed to be a fair, innocent-looking boy with fair hair—the kind of pure angelic creature depicted by painters as a chorister."

"By Jove!" Conniston dashed down his pipe excitedly. "You describe Judas to the life. The plot thickens."

"The plot——"

"The plot which was to involve you in the crime, *and, by Jove!* those who contrived it must have hired *Judas* to be your guide."

“Are you sure that this is the lad—Mrs. Moon’s grandson?”

“As sure as I can be from your word-painting. Jerry—Judas suits him much better—is just what you say: an innocent, butter-won’t-melt-in-my-mouth sort of brat who looks like an angel and acts like a denizen of the infernal regions. And now I remember,” went on Dick, “the little brute spoke to me after you left me when we talked in the Park. He was then bare-footed and selling matches.”

“This boy must be the same,” said Bernard, thoughtfully. “He also had bare feet and carried boxes of matches in his hand.”

“It’s Judas sure enough!” muttered Conniston, pulling his mustache and staring gloomily into the fire. “I wonder what he was doing in that galley? You followed him?”

“Yes, because he mentioned the Red Window. But for that I should have suspected something wrong. I don’t care about following strange urchins. But only Lucy knew about the Red Window.”

“She might have told Beryl.”

“What do you mean?”

“Never mind. Go on with your tale.”

“Well, I followed the boy. He kept a little ahead of me, and several times when I got lost in the fog he reappeared.”

“Judas is as clever as his father, the Accuser of the Brethren. How long were you getting to Crimea Square?”

“Allowing for stoppages, three-quarters of an hour. All the trouble took place about a quarter to eleven.”

“Did you see the Red Window?”

"I saw a red glare in a window on the first floor. I don't suppose the glass was red, but think some red material must have been placed over a lamp and that placed close to the window."

"Might have been a blind," mused Dick, "and yet when Beryl looked and his friend Mrs. Webber they saw no Red Window. Are you sure?"

"I am certain," responded Gore, emphatically. "When I saw the Red Window I was convinced that Lucy had sent for me, and, thinking that she had persuaded my grandfather to relent, I would have entered the house for a personal interview but that Mrs. Gilroy came out."

"Could you be seen from the house?"

"I don't think so, the fog was very thick remember."

"Was any signal given?"

Bernard looked hard at his friend. "You think it was a trap?"

"I am certain. Was there any signal?"

"A peculiar kind of whistle. Something like this!"

Gore whistled in a kind of ascending scale shrilly and in a particularly high key. The effect on Conniston was strange. He jumped up from his seat and walked hurriedly to and fro.

"Judas," he said. "I remember when I was down here that the little scamp had a kind of whistle like that—something like it. Listen!" Conniston whistled also, and Bernard nodded.

"That's it," he declared; "the whistle was given twice."

"Then the boy was Judas. He used to signal to Victoria in that way when the pair were up to their pranks. Wait!" Conniston opened the door and whistled loudly

in the same way. Twice he did this. Shortly after the second time the pattering of steps was heard and Victoria came running up the stairs with a lighted candle in her hand. She looked white and scared.

"Did you expect to see Jerry?" asked her master, blandly.

The girl stared and turned even whiter than she was. "I thought it was Jerry, sir," she murmured, leaning against the balustrade. "He used to whistle like that when he came home!"

"I learned it from Jerry," said Conniston, mendaciously, "and I tried to see if it would bring you. Go downstairs, girl. There's nothing wrong."

Victoria stared at Conniston with a suspicious look in her hard eyes, and then with a toss of her head ran down the stairs. Dick returned to the room and shut the door. "What do you think now?"

"It was Judas sure enough," said Bernard.

"Of course. And the signal was given to someone in the house to intimate that you were outside. Who came out?"

"Mrs. Gilroy?"

"Ah! Then she must have been waiting for the signal. By the way, you always seemed mixed over Mrs. Gilroy. When we first met you said that she didn't like you. Then you said she was your friend. Now which do you think she is?"

"I can hardly say. She always pretended to be my friend. I was never sure of her."

"Then you can be sure of her now. She is your bitter enemy."

"I am afraid so," sighed Gore, remembering the accusation.

"Well," said Dick, resuming his seat, "what next?"

"Mrs. Gilroy came out screeching 'Murder!' She dragged me upstairs and into the sitting-room——"

"Did you notice if there was a red lamp in the window?"

"No. I was too horrified by the sight of my dead grandfather. I loosened the handkerchief round the throat——"

"That was a bandana, Sir Simon's own, and was produced at the inquest. What about the one over the mouth?"

"The one steeped in chloroform? I don't know. I had it in my hand when Mrs. Gilroy accused me. Then I lost my head. I must have dropped it."

Conniston looked disappointed. "That's a pity," said he. "I fancied you might have unconsciously taken it with you. You see, it was a white handkerchief and Sir Simon never used one of that color. If there happened to be a name on the corner——"

"It would be that of the assassin. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes, that is what I mean. The assassin must have used his own handkerchief."

"Why do you think that?"

Dick made an impatient gesture. "Why, it's the most natural thing he would do," was his reply. "He enters the room, and talks with Sir Simon. In his pocket he has the handkerchief steeped in chloroform and uses it unexpectedly. It's as clear as day."

"Why do you think the assassin is a man?"

"I'll tell you that later. Go on."

"There's nothing more to say. Mrs. Gilroy said *that I was the assassin and tried to hold me.* The

policeman came and arrested me. Seeing what a fix I was in I bolted."

"You should have stood your ground," insisted Dick.

Bernard rose and in his turn paced the room. "Man alive, how could I do that?" he said irritably. "The position was dangerous enough to appal the bravest man. Mrs. Gilroy accused me, saying that I had been in the kitchen and had left there about six; that I had returned after ten and killed my grandfather. Also the housemaid Jane recognized me as the soldier who had been courting her. Not only that, but she addressed me as Bernard. Can't you see how strong the circumstantial evidence was and is? I did not get to Durham's before seven, and I was by myself before that. I can't prove an *alibi* then, and I left at ten, after which hour Mrs. Gilroy said I had come into the house. In three-quarters of an hour there was ample time for me to kill my grandfather. It is barely a quarter of an hour's walk from Durham's house on Camden Hill to Crimea Square. I could not prove an *alibi*, nor could you or Durham have helped me. I was at Durham's in the evening, but where was I before six and after ten? Dick, had I stayed I should have been hanged. These thoughts flashed through my mind and I made a dash for liberty, so that I might have time to think out my position. How I gained this refuge you know. And here I have been thinking ever since how to extricate myself from the dilemma and prove my innocence. I can't see how to do it, Dick. I can't see how to act."

"Steady, old boy. Come and sit down and we'll thresh out the matter."

He led Bernard back to the chair, into which the poor

fellow threw himself with a weary sigh. Conniston could not but acknowledge that the case against his friend was very strong. As he could not prove an *alibi*, the evidence of Mrs. Gilroy, of the cook, and page, and housemaid, would probably hang him. And also a sufficient motive for the crime might be found—by the jury—in the fact that Bernard had quarrelled with his grandfather and had been disinherited. Then, to perplex affairs still more, Judas had disappeared, and the Red Window, on the evidence of Beryl and Mrs. Webber, was non-existent. Certainly the lady declared she saw it, but afterwards she thought she had been mistaken. In the interval someone must have removed the red light. But that was a detail which could be argued later. In the meantime it was necessary to fix, if possible, the identity of the soldier who had haunted the kitchen and who apparently so strongly resembled Bernard as to be mistaken for him by Jane.

“It’s a plot,” said Conniston, at length, while Bernard gazed despairingly into the burning logs. “This fellow who resembled you and who took your name is the assassin.”

“How do you make that out?”

“Why! He was in the kitchen before six and was sent for by your grandfather. He at once left. Then he came back after ten and was admitted by Mrs. Gilroy, who might have made a mistake.”

“She could not mistake another man for me.”

“I don’t know. This fellow evidently was your double, or at least was made up to resemble you. But that would not be easy,” added Conniston, staring at his friend, “for you have no beard or mustache, and *it is difficult* to make up like another chap without such

aids. At least I should think so. And remember the lamp in the hall did not give a very good light—so Durham told me. The housemaid saw you only in that light, and therefore might have mistaken you for the fellow who courted her. Mrs. Gilroy——”

“She saw me in the full glare of the light in the sitting-room. She recognized me.”

“Yes. But according to her evidence she only admitted your double just after ten and introduced him into the sitting-room. She did not see him save under the hall lamp.”

“That is true. But my grandfather would soon detect the imposition.”

“Quite right,” rejoined Dick, smoothly, “he did, and then the assassin murdered him after stifling him with the chloroform.”

“But you forget my grandfather was a passionate man. He might and probably would have made a scene. Mrs. Gilroy below would have heard the row and would have come up.”

“She may be lying when she declares she heard nothing,” admitted Dick. “On the other hand, the assassin may have crossed directly over to your grandfather and have stifled his cries by placing the handkerchief at once over his mouth. Then he could strangle him at his leisure and clear out, as he did.”

“And then Mrs. Gilroy runs up, finds the dead, and rushes out to accuse me. I must have been brought in the nick of time,” said Bernard, ironically. “No, Dick, there’s more in it than that. Mrs. Gilroy is in the plot whomsoever contrived it.”

“Why, Beryl contrived it. He wanted the money.”

“Was he in the house at the time?”

"No. He didn't commit the crime himself, if that is what you mean. He with Miss Randolph was at the Curtain Theatre, which is near Crimea Square. He drove up in his friend's Mrs. Webber's carriage just when the row was on."

"Yes." Bernard passed his hand across his forehead. "I should have remembered that. I was in the hall at the time with the hand of the policeman on my shoulder. But I have grown so confused, Dick, that it's all like a dream."

"A nightmare rather. But why do you think Mrs. Gilroy is——"

"Is in the plot. Because, before she accused me, she said to herself, but loud enough for me to hear, 'It's the only way!'"

"Ha, ho!" said Conniston, excited, "you can swear to that."

"Of course I can. But I can't swear in the dock, and that is the only place I'm likely to occupy should I be caught."

"Is Mrs. Gilroy a friend of Beryl's?"

"I can't say that she was ever anyone's friend. She even seemed to hate my grandfather, although he was so good to her. She and Lucy were always quarrelling, and though she behaved civilly to me, I was—as I said before—never sure of her."

"You can certainly be sure of her now. But I can't help thinking Beryl had something to do with this plot. He had a lot at stake. I have heard tales about his gambling that would open your eyes. Durham made it his business to find out when he heard that Sir Simon intended to disinherit you in favor of Beryl."

"Durham has always been my friend," said Bernard,

wearily. "But as Beryl was out of the house he can't have anything to do with the crime."

"I'm not so certain of that. He might have set things in train, and then have arranged the theatre business so as to provide himself with an *alibi*."

"You think he hired someone to represent me?"

"I do, though, as I say, it would be hard for anyone to disguise himself like you. You haven't a double, have you?"

"Not that I ever heard of," said Gore, unable to restrain a smile; "but they say everyone has a double."

"Well, we must hunt out yours. If we find the soldier who resembled you, and who called himself by your name, we will be able to prove that he committed the crime."

"But how can you go to work?"

"I hardly know, Bernard. I must ask Durham. Meantime you can stay here. And there's Judas. I'll make it my business to hunt him out. I daresay he was employed by Beryl also."

"How you harp on Beryl."

"Because I am sure he has everything to do with the matter. It was a carefully-arranged trap, and you have fallen into it. What Mrs. Gilroy expects to gain I can't think. However, Beryl has found himself mistaken over the money. The new will—so Durham told me to tell you—was burnt by the old man, and so the old one, giving you all, stands. Both Mrs. Gilroy and Mr. Beryl are left out in the cold. And that is all the better for your safety."

"Why?" asked Bernard, looking puzzled.

"Because the person they hired to do the business—your double—will expect to be paid a large sum. *If not, he will round on them.*"

“You forget. If he confesses he puts a rope round his own throat according to your theory.”

“True enough. But there’s Judas. He’ll have his pound of flesh, or make an unholy row.”

“Dick,” said Bernard, seriously, “it’s impossible that a lad of thirteen can be such a villain as you make him out to be.”

“I tell you that lad is a born criminal, and if he goes on as he is doing he’ll come to the gallows, where, according to his grandmother, his forefathers suffered before him. Judas is as cunning as a fox, and very strong as to his will. Also, he is greedy of money——”

“You describe a man of experience.”

“I don’t know where Judas got his experience,” said Conniston, coolly, “but as Mrs. Gamp said of Bailly, junior, ‘All the wickedness of the world is print to him.’”

“I can’t believe it of such a lad.”

“You’ll have an opportunity of testing it some day,” retorted the young lord. “I only hope Victoria doesn’t correspond with Judas. If she does, she’ll tell him about a stranger at Cove Castle, and Judas, having seen you with me in the Park, will be quite sharp enough to put two and two together. Then there will be trouble.”

“But why should he connect me with the crime unless——”

“Unless he knows all. He does. You are a marked man, Bernard. However, it’s getting late. We’ll talk of this to-morrow. I must go and see Durham, and bring him down ostensibly for shooting.”

“I wish you would bring Alice over,” said Bernard. “My heart aches for a sight of her sweet face.”

“And dearly her face has cost you,” said Conniston.

“However, I’ll ask my dear aunt to come over, and bring Alice. As Miss Berengaria is a relative, it will be thought nothing out of the way. We’ll save you yet, Bernard; only I wish we had that one piece of evidence—the handkerchief you lost. When that is found we shall know who is guilty.”

CHAPTER XI

MRS. GILROY'S PAST

After making Lucy the mistress of the Hall until the return of its legal master, Mark Durham returned to town. Having regard to the fact that Beryl had taken up his quarters at the Conniston Arms—for what purpose the lawyer could not determine—he thought it wiser not to arouse the crafty young man's suspicions by a visit to Cove Castle. Certainly this was a somewhat over-strained sense of caution, since, being Conniston's lawyer, he could easily have gone there without it being thought odd. But Durham knew that Julius, driven to desperation by the loss of the fortune, would stop at nothing to accomplish his wish to obtain it. Did he learn that Bernard was still alive he would undoubtedly blackmail him. And in the present position of the case, when the truth could not be arrived at, Bernard, for his own safety, would be obliged to make terms. And such terms as Beryl would demand could not be granted.

Durham therefore returned to his business, and at once set to work. So far he had done all that he could to settle the government of the property during Gore's absence, and it now remained to take such steps as would unravel the intricacy of what appeared to be a plot to oust him from his rights. That Julius was at *the bottom* of the whole affair Durham was certain, and *that Julius had his eye on him* he conjectured. There-

fore it behooved him to move cautiously lest Beryl should counterplot him. And as in this game, which dealt with the issues of life and death, Durham's cards were all on the table and Beryl's were concealed, the chances of victory lay with the latter. And if Julius won, he would certainly have no mercy. Conniston had written a letter directed to the London office stating in full the conversation which had taken place between him and Sir Bernard. Durham was therefore in full possession of all facts not known to Julius, and after turning over these in his mind he concluded that it would be best to start with an examination of Jane Riordan, the delinquent housemaid. She could not possibly be in the plot, as he had seen how simple a woman she was when at the inquest. Therefore she certainly, for some strange reason, believed Bernard to be the young soldier who had courted her. She had sworn to his photograph, and had addressed him in the hall of the Crimea Square house by his name. Apparently—here Durham thought with Conniston—some person had been impersonating Bernard, so the lawyer sent a message to Miss Riordan asking her to call. Then he intended to question her as to the personality and speech of the double.

The housemaid arrived dressed in her best and looking rather downcast. She was evidently nervous, and could not think what the lawyer wanted with her. Like all her class she had a wholesome horror of legal procedure, and always kept out of the clutches of the law. But it appeared that for her share in receiving a follower she had been dismissed by her master, Mr. Jefferies. Being without a situation she grasped at the *chance afforded of seeing Durham*, and hoped by work-

ing on his sympathies to secure a new one. But for this want she would probably have refused the invitation. As it was she duly appeared, and was accommodated with a seat beside Durham's desk. He then proceeded to question her, thinking a plain, straightforward examination would best get at the truth.

"Now then," said Durham, wheeling round his chair so that he could look her in the face. "You know I am the solicitor of Sir Bernard Gore, who is accused of the murder of his grandfather. In spite of the evidence given, I do not believe he is guilty."

"I don't think so either, sir," sobbed Jane, who had got out her handkerchief at the mention of the name.

"You never knew him."

"Yes, I did. He courted me for nearly a month. And a sweet young man he was, the very best I ever walked out with."

Durham eyed her keenly. Apparently she was speaking as she believed, and he considered that the double must resemble Bernard in a marvellous degree to make the housemaid thus sure of his identity with the accused young baronet. "You misunderstand me," he said mildly. "However, I'll come to the point presently. You must answer me as though you were in a witness-box."

"Yes, sir," said Miss Riordan, timidly. "But, please, before I speak, could you help me to a new situation? Mr. Jefferies dismissed me because I walked out with Bernard and received him in the kitchen."

"Hum," said Durham, reflectively. He did not know very well what to say at the outset as he was by no means prepared to promise to assist her off-hand. But on consideration he saw the necessity of keeping so

valuable a witness under his own eye and away from Beryl, always supposing Beryl to be mixed up in the matter. He therefore made up his mind swiftly, and in his answer gained Jane's goodwill. "Yes, I can help you," he said; "my housekeeper wants a housemaid. I will give you my address and a letter to her. Go to Camden Hill and if your character is satisfactory she will engage you."

"Oh, thank you, sir," said Jane, effusively. "I'm sure my character is all that can be desired, save in this last trouble. But Bernard was such an agreeable——"

"There! there!" interrupted Durham, cutting her short, "we won't talk of that just now. This last episode of your career will not stand in the way of my housekeeper engaging you. I'll make that clear to her in my letter. Come now, will you answer my questions?"

"Yes, sir. Any you like to ask," said Jane, delighted at the granting of her petition, and privately thinking Durham a sweet gentleman.

"Good!" said the lawyer in an official manner. "What is your name?"

"Jane Riordan."

Durham noted this and her other answers down.

"You were how long at Mr. Jefferies?"

"Six months, sir."

"When did you first see this soldier?"

"Bernard, sir. In the Park, about a month before Sir Simon came."

"How did he become acquainted with you?"

Jane giggled and looked down. "Well, sir," she said, blushing, "I am not bad-looking and Bernard——"

"He called himself Bernard?"

“ Yes, sir. He said he was a corporal in the Imperial Yeomanry. He had seen me in Crimea Square.”

“ In this house? ”

“ No, sir. Leaving the house. He said he had come several times, being taken with my looks, and that he always wanted to know me. As he was so handsome, sir, and spoke so civil, we walked out. He treated me to tea in the Park, and then I asked him to meet cook. He accepted at once, sir, and most willingly.”

“ I daresay,” muttered Durham, seeing in this meeting how the scamp had forced his company on the girl so as to enter the house likely to be occupied by Sir Simon. “ And he came? ”

“ Many times, sir—oh! many times, and made himself so agreeable that cook was quite jealous.”

“ Who did he say he was? ”

“ Well, sir, he did nothing but hint, saying he was a gentleman of high rank, as could be seen from his manners, and that he had enlisted because of a quarrel he had with his grandfather. But I never knew he was Sir Simon’s grandson until I lost him,” sobbed Jane. “ Oh, dear me, and to think I would have been Lady Gore, with diamonds and fine clothes, had he lived.”

“ Hum! ” said Durham, digging the point of his pencil into the blotting paper, “ so he practically told you the story of Sir Bernard.”

“ Yes, sir, as I afterwards learned it. And wasn’t that natural, sir, seeing he was Sir Bernard? ”

“ Are you sure he was? ”

Jane stared. “ Why, sir, he was always frightened when Mrs. Gilroy came down to the kitchen and said she was his enemy, and that if she saw him he could *never marry me*. I didn’t know what he meant at that

time, but I see now. She would have said who he was. I used to hide him in cupboards, and once in the coal cellar. Cook and William never told, being sympathetic like!"

"Did he speak in educated manner?"

"Like the gentleman he was, sir, having been educated at Eton."

"When you saw him in the grasp of the policeman did you recognize him? Was he the same man who courted you?"

Jane stared again and looked puzzled. "There isn't two, sir, that I know of," she said; "and now," with a fresh burst of tears, "there isn't one, seeing he is drowned. Oh dear, dear me. Yes, sir, I knew him at once, although the light was bad. And when I would have seen him plainer, Mrs. Gilroy would not let him be brought under the lamp."

"Oh, indeed," said Durham, making a note of this. "Look here," and he held out a large portrait of Bernard, different to that shown at the inquest. "You recognize this, I suppose?"

"That's my Bernard, sir."

"Is it a good likeness?"

Jane examined the photograph closely. "Not what I'd call a very good one, sir, neither was the other. There's a look wanting."

"What sort of a look?"

"Well, sir, you might call it a rougish look, of a gentleman who had seen life and had been gay. This portrait is sad and horrid looking. I should have been afraid to be courted by Bernard if he had looked like this. But he was always bright and full of larks. Then he has not got a spot on his chin as he has here. I suppose he cut himself shaving when he had this done."

Durham started. Here was a means of identification. Bernard had a rather large mole on the left of his chin. "Didn't the man who walked out with you have this spot?" he said, purposely adopting the word she had used.

"No, sir. He had a chin like a new-born infant, smooth and white."

"Did he ever write you a letter?"

Jane blushed again. "Just a short note making an appointment, sir," she said, feeling in her breast, "it being early for love letters, and me being a most respectable young lady. I carry it next my heart."

Durham took the note she handed him without hesitation, and glanced through it. The writing was not unlike that of Bernard's, yet he saw very plainly that it lacked several characteristics which distinguished that of Gore. The note simply asked Jane to meet the writer on Sunday at the Marble Arch, and was signed "Bernard."

"I'll give you a sovereign for this," said Durham, quietly.

"Thank you, sir," said Jane, accepting without a moment's hesitation. "Of course, Bernard's dead now, so there's no use keeping his letters, but if he'd been alive I'd have kept them on the chance of his not making me Lady Gore!"

"Did he wear any rings?" asked Durham, paying the money and putting the letter away.

"Three, sir. Two gold and one silver."

This was another point of difference. Bernard hated rings and never by any chance wore any, not even a signet ring. But by this time Jane's information was exhausted, and Durham concluded her examination for

the moment. He would be able to resume it later when necessary, and congratulated himself on the fact that he had secured Jane as his housemaid. When brought face to face with the real Bernard she would be able to see the difference between him and his double. And then she might also be able to recognize the double should he be found. Just as he was dismissing Jane with a letter to his housekeeper a clerk brought in a name written on a piece of paper. "Mrs. Gilroy," said Durham to himself, wondering greatly. "Tell her to come in," he said aloud, and ushered Jane out quickly by another door. It would never have done to have let Mrs. Gilroy meet her, seeing that the Hall housekeeper was hostile to Bernard. So Jane departed rejoicing, and Durham went back to his desk well satisfied.

"Bernard never wrote this note, as it is different in many ways to his writing," he murmured. "Bernard never wears rings, and he has a mole on his chin which this double apparently lacks. Without doubt the impersonation has been very clever. But I wonder how I am to find the double."

Before he could reply to this perplexing question, the clerk showed in Mrs. Gilroy, as demure and sly-looking as ever. She was richly dressed in black silk, much better dressed in fact than she had ever been during the life of her master. Also Durham noted that there was an aggressive air about her which he had not noticed before. Perhaps this was due to her receipt of an annuity. She was not a lady, and yet she could not be called common. Durham had never examined her carefully before, but now that she was dangerous to Gore's interest he looked at her carefully. A strange woman

and a dangerous was his verdict. He proceeded to feel his way cautiously, wondering what she had come about.

"It's to see me about your annuity?" he said, tentatively.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Gilroy, coldly, and took the seat which had been vacated by Jane. "My beggarly annuity?"

The lawyer, who had taken up his position before the fire with his hands under the tails of his frock coat, turned to look at her. The bitterness of the tone startled him. "What do you mean?"

"Mean!" echoed Mrs. Gilroy, with a vindictive glitter in her pale eyes. "That Sir Simon promised me five hundred a year for life."

"Oh, you must be mistaken," said Durham, quickly. "He never said you were to have more than one hundred."

"He might not to you, but he did to me," said the housekeeper, doggedly. "I have a right to five hundred."

"I think not," said the lawyer, calmly. "And let me tell you, Mrs. Gilroy, that Sir Simon did not place your name at all in the second will. Had it been executed, you would not have had even the one hundred you despise. Therefore, you may congratulate yourself"—he watched her face while speaking—"that Sir Simon changed his mind about disinheriting his grandson."

The woman's eyes glittered still more maliciously and a color rose in her bloodless cheeks. "Oh!" she said, with icy disdain, "so Sir Simon would have deprived me of my rights, would he? It's lucky he's dead, or he'd find himself on the wrong side of the hedge with e."

"Ah!" Durham resumed his seat and waited to hear what would come forth. And something would come out not easily attainable at other times, for Mrs. Gilroy was apparently losing her temper. This was most extraordinary for her, as she was usually cautious. But since the death of her master, who had kept her in check, she seemed to be a much more reckless woman. The lawyer had always wondered what bond held Sir Simon and the housekeeper together, and now there seemed some likelihood that he would learn, if he held his tongue and allowed full play to that of Mrs. Gilroy.

"I knew how it would be," she muttered. "I guessed he would play me false. He never was worth a kekaubi."

"You are a gipsy," said Durham, looking up.

"What makes you say that?"

"Kekaubi is Romany for kettle. You wouldn't use it unless—"

"Who I am is nothing to you," interrupted Mrs. Gilroy, sharply.

"Yet you don't resemble the Romany!" said Durham, looking at her drab appearance. "Your eyes are pale and your hair—"

"Let my appearance be, Mr. Durham. I am here for justice, not to hear my looks discussed. Sir Simon left me one hundred a year. I want you as the executor of the estate to make it the five hundred he promised me."

"I don't know that he promised you that sum," said the solicitor, "and even if he did I cannot give it to you. The money now belongs to Sir Bernard Gore."

"He is supposed to be dead."

"You put it rightly," replied the man. "He is supposed to be dead, but until his dead body is found I will

administer the estate on his behalf. But I have no power to help you."

Mrs. Gilroy seemed struck by this view of the case. "Suppose Sir Bernard isn't dead?" she asked.

Durham felt a qualm and suppressed a start with difficulty. Had this dangerous woman discovered the fugitive at Cove Castle. "Do you know if he is alive?" asked Durham, quietly looking at her.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Gilroy, who seemed to be thinking. Then she rose. "I don't know that I need bother you further," she said.

"Will you tell me why you demand this money?"

"Because Sir Simon promised it to me."

"On what grounds?"

"On very good grounds."

"Will you tell me what they are?"

"Will you give me the five hundred a year if I do?" she countered.

"That is out of my power. When Sir Bernard appears I will speak to him on the subject if your claim is a good one."

"My claim is an excellent one," she burst out, raising herself to her full height. "It is the claim of a wronged woman!" She paused. "I want to ask you about the will," she said. "Is it worded that the money is left 'to my grandson.'"

"To my grandson Bernard Gore."

"The name is mentioned."

"It is. The money is clearly left to Sir Bernard."

"Sir Bernard," she sneered. "Why give him a title to which he has no claim? The money may be his, else I would not tell you what I now do tell you. My son is the baronet—my son Michael."

Durham stared at her, quite taken aback. "What on earth are you talking about, Mrs. Gilroy?" he demanded.

"Mrs. Gilroy," she echoed with scorn. "I shall no longer use a false name. I am Mrs. Walter Gore."

"Impossible. Walter Gore was married to Bianca Tolomeo!"

"He was married to me first," said Mrs. Gilroy, rapidly. "Yes, you may stare, but I am the lawful wife of Walter Gore and my son Michael is the heir. He is the image of his father. There's no trickery about the matter."

"The image of his father," cried Durham, a sudden light breaking in upon him. "And Walter Gore was tall, slim, the image of his son Bernard. Mrs. Gore, or Mrs. Gilroy, or whatever you call yourself, was it your son who murdered his grandfather?"

The woman became livid. "No, I swear he didn't. He is in America."

"He is in England, and he masqueraded as Bernard when courting Jane the housemaid," said Durham, excitedly. "You say yourself he resembled Walter Gore. Bernard is exactly like his father, so Michael must resemble him sufficiently to pass as him."

"It is absolutely false!" cried Mrs. Gilroy, seeing she had fallen into the trap of her own words. "My son is in America. You shall not prove him guilty. I opened the door to Bernard."

"To Michael. You perhaps mistook him for Bernard."

"A mother can't mistake her own son. But Michael is the heir. I shall write to America and bring him home. *I can prove my marriage with Walter Gore.*"

“Do so by all means,” said Durham, recovering his wits. “I am acting for Sir Bernard, and he shall not lose the title if I can help it. I see you are playing a deep game, Mrs. Gilroy, but you have let out too much. I shall now search for Michael, your son, and see if he was not in London on the night of the twenty-third of October.”

Mrs. Gilroy, pale and looking like a tigress at bay, drew back to the door without a word. Before Durham knew of her intention she opened it and slipped away. He did not seek to detain her.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW PAGE

Things went very smoothly at Gore Hall after Durham had established Lucy as its mistress during the absence of Bernard. The girl herself firmly believed that her cousin was dead and assumed deep mourning. She had been fond of Bernard in a sisterly way, and felt his loss deeply. It was her outspoken affection that provoked a quarrel between her and Julius, and which led to the breaking of their engagement. Lucy had a high temper, which had been kept in subjection during the life of Sir Simon. But now that she tasted the sweets of power she was not disposed to allow Julius to treat her as he chose.

Mrs. Gilroy came back from her visit to the lawyer in rather a dejected frame of mind. She saw that she had gone too far and had given Durham an inkling as to the possibility of Michael having masqueraded as Bernard. The housekeeper had thought her position unassailable, knowing that she had married Walter Gore; and although there was a flaw in the circumstances upon which she built her claim, yet she trusted to her own cleverness to conceal this from the too-clever lawyer. But, apart from this, the fact that he suspected someone of passing himself off as Bernard startled her, and opened an abyss at her feet. On leaving the office she judged it best to lower her crest for the moment and to wait patiently to see what would

transpire. Mrs. Gilroy was a well-educated woman and very astute, therefore she hoped to gain her ends by craft if not by force. So far she had failed, but she did not intend to abandon her claim for one failure.

As it was, she came back to the Hall and behaved herself much better than she had ever done before. She was respectful to Lucy, and did not display her impatience of commands that she had hitherto done. No one could have been meeker, and although Miss Randolph did not like or trust the woman, she had no fault to find with her in any way.

Lucy suffered severely from the shock of Sir Simon's tragic death, and from the supposed death of Sir Bernard. In fact, the matter so preyed on her nerves that she became prostrate, and Dr. Payne had to be called in. He was a handsome and popular young doctor who had practiced in Hurseton. As this was the first time he had been called to the Hall, he was naturally very pleased, and was very attentive.

"A complete rest is what you need," he said to Miss Randolph. "I think you should keep to your bed as much as possible, and I will give you a tonic. Naturally you suffer from the terrible circumstances of Sir Simon's death." He thought a moment and then continued, "cheerful companion would do you good. Shall I ask Miss Malleson to come over?"

"Is she cheerful?" asked Lucy languidly. "I fear not, doctor. She was engaged to my cousin, and his death has made her sad."

"Probably, but she bears up wonderfully. But that she is in mourning one would hardly guess she had sustained such a loss. Was she very much attached to Mr. Gore?"

“Yes. I never saw a more attached couple. Did you ever meet him?”

“Once at Miss Plantagenet’s. You know I am great friends with the old lady. I often visit her, not professionally, for she is as healthy as a trout in a pond.”

“Is Alice—Miss Malleson also well?”

“In very good health, and appears resigned to her loss.”

“I should have thought she would have felt it more,” said Lucy, perplexed. “Alice has such a tender heart.”

Dr. Payne was doubtful. So far as he saw, Miss Malleson was remarkably cheerful under her sorrow. “She is philosophic, Miss Randolph, and that is wise. I think, however, if you would have her over to see you, it would do both her and yourself good.”

“I shall write a note to her to-day,” said Lucy. “I am very fond of her, and we get on very well together. Poor Alice. I wish Bernard had lived, so that he could have married her.”

“From what I read in the papers it is just as well Mr. Gore did not live,” said Payne, rising to take his leave. “If he was guilty—”

“Ah!” said Lucy, raising herself with animation from the sofa upon which she was lying. “If he was guilty. There it is, doctor. I do not believe he was. Bernard had a high temper, but he could not always control it, and was a kind-hearted boy. He is innocent I am sure.”

“How are you sure, my dear Lucy?” asked a third voice, and she looked up to see Julius standing in the doorway. He came forward. “Forgive me if I heard a few words of your conversation. But I have just come in. Dr. Payne, I hope I see you well.”

"Quite well," said the doctor, who did not like Beryl, thinking him, in schoolboy phrase, "a sneak." "I am just going, Mr. Beryl."

"Are you ill, Lucy?" asked Beryl, with affection.

"I have an attack of nerves," she replied pettishly. "Poor Bernard's death has shaken me."

"It is just as well he did die, though."

"I have been saying that," said Payne; "but I must take my leave. I will come and see you again, Miss Randolph, and remember what I told you. Rest and cheerful company—Miss Malleeson's for choice."

He departed smiling, and they heard him gallop off. When the sound of the horse's hoofs died away, Julius, who was looking out of the window, turned abruptly to Lucy. "Why do you think Bernard is innocent?" he asked.

"Because, if he is guilty, his action gives the lie to his whole life, Julius," she replied, raising herself on her elbow. "I can't believe he killed my uncle."

"Sir Simon is not your uncle," said Beryl, jealously. "You are only a distant relative."

"Perhaps my marriage with you may make me a nearer one."

"If we ever do marry," said Julius, gloomily.

"So far as I am concerned I should like to break the engagement, Julius. We were never suited to one another."

Beryl's vanity was hurt. "Why did you accept me then?"

"What else could I do? It was Sir Simon's wish that we should marry, and, owing to my circumstances, I had no choice in the matter. During his life I was merely a puppet. But you do not care for me."

"I do. I swear I do."

"Although you swore for an hour, I should never believe you. There is only one thing in this world you love, Julius, and that is money. You told Sir Simon about Bernard being in love with Alice, that the poor boy might be disinherited."

Beryl did not deny the charge. "I believe you are in love with Bernard yourself," he said.

"No. Bernard and I are like brother and sister. But he is dead, so you need not cast stones at his memory."

"Are you sure he is dead?" asked Beryl, warming his hands.

Lucy sat up on the sofa and pushed the loose hair back from her forehead. "Why do you say that?" she asked sharply.

Julius stared at the fire. "I can't understand Durham's attitude," he said evasively. "He must know that Bernard is dead, seeing that the coat and hat were found on the banks of the river. No man could have lived in the cold and the fog. Yet if Durham was sure he would not hold the estate against Bernard's coming."

"Mr. Durham requires proof of the death," rejoined Lucy, sharply; "and until then, he is bound to administer the estate according to the will. As Bernard's body has not been found, there is always a chance that he may have escaped."

"I sincerely trust not."

"Ah! You always hated Bernard."

"On the contrary, I speak for his good. What's the use of his coming to life when he must suffer for his crime?"

"I don't know whether you intend to marry Bernard or Lord Conniston," he said, "but I wish, which ever it is, joy of a spitfire."

"And an honest woman," said Miss Randolph, wrathfully, for the reference to Conniston touched her nearly; "but you go too fast. You can't yet prove that Bernard lives."

"I go to do so," sneered Julius, and bowed himself ironically out of the room, leaving Lucy furious both with him and with herself.

She was angry with herself because she felt that in speaking of Conniston she had colored. And as a matter of fact she greatly admired the young lord, even though they had only met once, for Conniston was one of those irresistible men who appeal to women. Lucy thought—but it matters little what she thought. All she knew was that her engagement to Julius, which had always weighed on her conscience, was at an end. "I am free now—free," she said, stretching her hands. "Oh, what an escape I have had from that wicked man. He has shown his hand too plainly. I will put Mr. Durham on his guard, and"—here she blushed—"and Lord Conniston."

Julius, walking towards the Bower, was also angry with himself. As Lucy thought, he had shown his hand too clearly. "It would have been better," he considered, "to have held my tongue. I should have done so had she not goaded me into speech. She will tell Durham and that interfering Conniston and put them on their guard. Well"—he laughed and looked at the small boy trotting beside him—"I am equal to both."

The boy was a handsome, innocent-looking little fellow, rather undersized. With his clear skin, his fair

hair and wide blue eyes he looked like the conventional picture of a cherub. No one would have suspected that such a childish creature was a born criminal. But his mind had not yet had time to work on his face, and the mask of his childhood—for he was only thirteen—concealed his evil nature successfully. In a few years, when his passions worked their way through the mask, his face, now so smooth and innocent, would be wrinkled and sinful. His mind would have marked plainly its signet on the smooth surface. But at present he looked charmingly innocent, although he already knew much more about life than was good for him. Julius, in order that the lad might make an impression on Miss Plantagenet, had dressed him in a new suit, and pleased with himself—for much of the boy remained in this precocious criminal—young Jerry trotted along smiling.

“Jerry,” said Beryl, looking down, “mind you are nice to the old lady.”

Jerry tossed his fair curls and looked roguish. “Oh, that’s all right, Mr. Beryl. All old ladies take to me. They think I’m a kind of Holy Bill, and I let them think so. It pays.”

“Jerry, you are a young scamp of the worst.”

The boy chuckled as though he had received a compliment. “I like doing things,” he explained frankly; “it’s fun. When I was with old grandmother at the castle I hated doing nothing. If it hadn’t been for Victoria—the girl I told you about—I should have left long before. I’m going to marry her.”

“You know nothing about such things,” corrected the respectable Mr. Beryl, severely.

“I know a *jolly sight* more than you think,” said the *urchin under his breath* and producing a cigarette.

Julius took it from him. "Miss Plantagenet must not think you smoke, Jerry. She is most respectable."

"And dull," said Jerry, putting his hands in his pockets. "Lord! what a bore stopping with her will be. But I can nip over and see Victoria when I like."

"And keep an eye on Lord Conniston as I told you."

"I'm fly," said Master Moon, and began whistling.

Julius looked at him with satisfaction. He intended that the boy should remain in the neighborhood so as to keep watch on Conniston—whom since he left the army so unexpectedly he suspected—on Durham, and on Alice Malleson. For this last reason he was introducing him into the house. If Bernard were alive—as Julius began to suspect—he would come to one of these three people, and then Jerry would at once become aware of the fact. Then it would remain with Bernard whether to be hanged or to surrender a large portion of the property which Beryl thought rightfully belonged to him. How he came to this conclusion it is difficult to say.

Miss Berengaria was as usual in the garden looking after the well-being of some white chrysanthemums. She raised her head when she saw her visitors, and a look of annoyance crossed her face when she saw Mr. Beryl. Notwithstanding Durham's advice, she found it difficult to keep her natural dislike of the young man in abeyance, and but for the sake of Alice she would have refused to let him enter the Bower. As it was, and with great diplomacy—so great that it deceived even the astute Beryl—she asked him to come into the house. Luckily Alice was out of the way, having gone to pay a visit. But she was expected back momentarily, and Miss Berengaria wished to get rid of

Julius before the girl returned. She might be able to conceal her real feelings, but Alice being so young and impulsive might show her dislike too plainly and put Beryl on his guard.

"Who is this you have here?" asked Miss Plantagenet, putting on her spectacles and surveying Jerry with admiration. "What a pretty lad!"

"He is a lad I wish you to help," said Beryl, blandly. "Last time we met, Miss Plantagenet, you mentioned that you wanted a page."

"Not exactly a page," said the old dame, rubbing her nose, a sure sign she was perplexed. "Merely a boy to see after the fowls, and to wait about the house when necessary."

"I love fowls," said Jerry sweetly, and looking as innocent as a babe, "and dogs and things like that."

"You seem a nice lad. Who is he, Mr. Beryl?"

"A poor boy who sold matches in London."

"But I didn't always," piped Jerry, shifting from one leg to the other in feigned embarrassment, and playing his part perfectly. "I lived with grandmother at Cove Castle."

"That's Lord Conniston's place," said Miss Berengaria, more perplexed than ever. "What were you doing there?"

"I lived with grandmother. My name is Jerry Moon."

"Oh! And how did you come to be selling matches?"

"His lordship got me a situation at a tobacconist's," said the child-like Moon, "and then he got me turned off."

"Why? *That is not like Lord Conniston.*"

"You had better not ask the reason," interposed Julius; "it is not to Lord Conniston's credit."

"But I must know the reason," said the old dame, sharply, "if you want me to take the lad into my service."

Jerry in answer to a look of Beryl's began to weep ostentatiously.

"I saw his lordship dressed as a soldier," he snuffed, "and I told Mr. Beryl. His lordship was so angry that he got me turned off, saying I was ungrateful."

"You should always hold your tongue," said Miss Berengaria, angrily. "You had no right to tell what Lord Conniston wished kept secret. It was only a freak on his part. He left the army at my request."

"At your request?" said Julius, looking at her directly.

Forearmed as she was, Miss Berengaria, with the consciousness of Bernard's secret, flushed through her withered skin. However, she did not lower her eyes but turned the conversation defiantly. "Let us keep to the matter in hand. Do you want to enter my service?"

"Yes, sweet lady."

"Don't talk like that, child. Call me ma'am."

"Yes, ma'am," said Jerry, submissively. "Mr. Beryl—such a kind gentleman, ma'am—said you would help me."

"I will so long as you are honest."

Jerry thrust his tongue in his cheek, but Julius answered, "I can vouch for his honesty," he said. "But he talks too much."

"He must hold his tongue here," said the old dame, severely, and shaking her trowel at the boy. "Where ~~—~~ his clothes?"

"I have none but what's on," cried Jerry. "The kind gentleman got them for me, ma'am."

"You are a better Christian than I thought," said Miss Berengaria, looking at Beryl. "Well, you can stay here, boy. Go to the kitchen and tell the servants to give you something to eat."

Jerry grinned, and ducked towards the door. "Good bye, Jerry," said Beryl, kindly. "Don't forget me."

"If I do may I be—oh no, kind lady—I mean, ma'am—I won't swear. I never did, having been to Sunday school. Yes, ma'am, I'm going," and Jerry in answer to an imperative wave of his new mistress's hand disappeared. Miss Berengaria turned to Beryl.

"He certainly has a long tongue," she said severely. "I must see that he doesn't swear or smoke or indulge in any of those wicked things. I hope he will do your recommendation credit, Mr. Beryl."

"I hope he will," said Julius, and felt a strong inclination to thrust his tongue in his cheek also. Then he took his leave and the old lady watched him go.

"What is this for?" she asked herself, and went inside to write a report to Durham.

CHAPTER XIII

A CONSULTATION

A week later Bernard was seated in the sitting room on the first floor of the castle looking out at the landscape. It was picturesque but depressing. The sun had just set behind dark clouds, and the red glare behind them looked like a fire in a grate. The marshes were covered with white mist, and the arm of the sea that reached up to the castle walls resembled a stream of blood. And over all the veil of night was falling darker and darker. Even to a mind at ease the prospect would have been cheerless, but to Bernard in his present low spirits it was positively suicidal. He felt more miserable than he had ever done in his life.

While watching and waiting, he knew not for what, the sound of voices was heard. As he started to his feet with that nervousness which had increased of late, the door opened slowly and Mark Durham entered smiling. Bernard with an ejaculation of surprise hastened towards him with outstretched hands.

“My dear Mark, how unexpected and how jolly. I was just dying to see someone. When did you arrive?”

“This very minute, and Mrs. Moon”—he turned to the door through which could be seen the gigantic form of the ogress—“showed me up at once. I have come for the night”—he raised his voice for the benefit of the housekeeper—“on business connected with Lord *Conniston's* estate.”

“Sir,” said Mrs. Moon, peering in, “don’t tell me as his lordship is going to fight.”

“No! no! Make yourself easy. He has left the army. Should he go to the front it will be in a way more befitting his rank.”

“And a relief it is to hear that,” said Mrs. Moon, placing a large hand on her ample bosom. “When Jerry, who is my grandson, wrote me his lordship was a common soldier, I could have fainted, but what I thought Victoria would bring me to with hot water like the spiteful imp of darkness she is.”

“Did Jerry write?” asked Durham, making a sign to Gore to be silent.

“Of course he did, and said as he had been turned out of his employment for a—recognizing of his lordship—a thing I should never have thought his lordship would have done, seeing he got my own flesh and blood, which Jerry is, the situation.”

“It was not for that reason, Mrs. Moon. Jerry told a lie if he wrote that to you.”

“Printed or speaking lies, he tells plenty,” moaned the giantess. “Oh dear me, so like his poor dear father, though I thumped him rarely when I had the strength. But what’s my Jerry, bad as he is and liar though he be, a-doing of now? He may be starving in that nasty London, and a rare child he was for tit-bits.”

“I can tell you where he is, Mrs. Moon,” broke in Bernard. “I have just heard.” He glanced towards the table wherein lay a letter. “He is a page in the house of Miss Plantagenet at Hurseton.”

“Deary me,” said Mrs. Moon in mild surprise. “I do hope as he’ll give satisfaction, and pleased I am. I must tell *Victoria*, she being taken up greatly with my *Jerry*, though both of them be but young.”

Durham detained her. "No! Don't say a word to Victoria."

"And why not, sir?"

"If you do Jerry will lose his post," explained Durham. "Miss Plantagenet has heard of Victoria, and she doesn't seem to be a good companion for Jerry. Only on condition that Victoria has nothing to do with Jerry will the boy be kept on. It is for this reason he has not been over to see you."

"And him being so near and denying his own flesh and blood," wailed Mrs. Moon, raising her large hands; "but Jerry was always bad. Well, I don't want him to lose his place, so I'll hold my tongue, and right Miss Plantagenet is, Victoria being a bad and wicked critter as I'd take my Bible oath. If only another girl would stop here I'd give Victoria the walking-ticket. But, bless you, the castle's that dismal and the——"

Here Durham interrupted impatiently. "Go and send up some tea, Mrs. Moon, and hold your tongue about Jerry's whereabouts. If Victoria learns, she may go over, and then Jerry would be dismissed."

"To the gallows," said the housekeeper, closing the door, "to which he will assuredly go," she added, opening it again, "he taking after his forebears, who were hanged for many evils. Tea did you say. Ah, well, there's some comfort in tea," and muttering to herself the weak old creature left the two gentlemen to themselves.

By this time Bernard had returned to the fire and was pushing forward a chair for Durham. "I am glad to see you, Mark," said he, cordially. "But why did you stop me speaking?"

"I didn't stop you, worse luck," said Durham, run-

ning his hand through his curly hair. "I didn't want Mrs. Moon to know where Jerry was. I only hope she will hold her tongue; but if she does tell Victoria, and she is weak enough to babble a lot, Jerry will learn in a way I need not describe that you are here."

Bernard saw that he had been foolish and bit his lip. "I should have been silent," he said. "But the fact is, Mark, I didn't think of Jerry being dangerous. Alice simply wrote saying that he had been engaged by Miss Berengaria as a page, and that she would give me the details when she came to-morrow."

"So like a woman," grumbled Durham, sitting down. "It would have been better had she told you that Beryl had induced Miss Plantagenet to take the boy as a page."

Bernard stared. "But she is on my side," he faltered.

"Of course she is, and for that reason she has taken the boy. I told her to be civil to Beryl, so that I might learn what his game was. It is better that we should keep all these people in sight. I have my eye on Beryl, who haunts my office. Jane Riordan is in my employment. Miss Randolph keeps watch on Mrs. Gilroy, and Miss Plantagenet will see that Jerry—or Judas as Conniston calls him—does no mischief. If I can get all the threads into my hands, Bernard, I'll soon be able to find a clue likely to lead me to the central mystery of this labyrinth. And there's no denying," added Durham, wrinkling his brows, "that the case is a perplexing one."

"I understand about you and Miss Berengaria," said Bernard, nursing his chin, "you are my friends; but Lucy. I have always had my doubts about Lucy, and offended Conniston by saying so. He admires Lucy."

“Miss Randolph is entirely to be trusted,” said the lawyer, decisively; “she is your friend, and has broken off her engagement with Beryl. I think he showed too plainly that he wanted to ruin you and——”

“Does he know that I am alive?” interrupted Gore, much perturbed.

“No! But I think he is suspicious. He has some rascally scheme in his head or he would not have placed Judas in Miss Berengaria’s establishment; luckily, the old lady will watch the boy. However, as I was saying, the engagement between Miss Randolph and Beryl is ended. She told me that she had given him back the ring. She is quite on our side.”

“Conniston will be glad,” said Gore, smiling in a haggard sort of way; “he admires Lucy.”

“So do I. She’s a charming girl, especially now that she has been allowed to exert her individuality, which was crushed by Sir Simon. I often wondered you did not fall in love with her, Bernard.”

“Oh, we are like brother and sister,” said Bernard, quietly, then he sighed and started to his feet. “See here, Mark, I can’t stand this sort of thing any longer.”

“What sort of thing?”

“This inaction. Here I am mouldering in this old castle, a prey to apprehension, and letting other people do my work. Why shouldn’t I come to life and give myself up?”

“You can do that later, when we know more about the case than we do at present. Don’t be rash, Bernard.”

Gore walked up and down the room. “The life will drive me mad,” he said impatiently. “Thank Heaven Alice comes to see me to-morrow.”

“Why didn’t she come before?”

"She would have done so had she thought it safe. Alice is as true as steel. But with Beryl about the place—and he has called several times on Miss Berengaria—she thought it best to postpone her visit. But Conniston asked them both over to-morrow, and they are coming openly."

"So they told me," rejoined Durham, coolly, "and I particularly impressed on them that they were not to bring that imp over. If he learns you are here—" The lawyer paused.

"What will he do?"

"Sell you to the highest bidder. I think we can get the better of Beryl there, though. We have the money and Beryl hasn't. Judas is in the employment of Beryl so long as it pays him. But if I promise him a good sum he'll hold his tongue whatever he learns. It's just as well, seeing how rash you were telling his grandmother where he is to be found."

"I was foolish," admitted Gore, gloomily, "but I am so worried that I do foolish things. Do you think there is any chance of getting at the truth, Mark?"

"Here's the tea," said Durham, rising at the sound of a shuffle at the door. "Let me have a cup, and then I'll tell you what I have discovered."

"Anything important?" asked Gore, as the door opened.

"Very important. I have a clue."

It was Victoria, sharp and dark and vixenish as ever, who brought in the tray. But Durham had spoken in low tones, so he did not think she had heard. Besides, he was not so alarmed about her and Judas as he had been. Both were venal, and at any cost their silence would have to be purchased. It would be better for

Bernard to lose half his estate than remain a fugitive from justice. Victoria darted a suspicious glance at Bernard, as from the air of mystery surrounding his stay at the castle she thought he was, as she put it, "wanted for something." But she was too clever, and, truth to say, too impotent to move without the co-operation of Jerry Moon. Besides, beyond a mere suspicion, she had nothing to go upon. Queerly enough, she had heard nothing of the murder, but then Mrs. Moon kept her so close that Victoria rarely had an opportunity of indulging her gossiping instincts, of which she had her full share.

When she withdrew, Durham poured out two cups of tea and ate some toast. Gore waited patiently enough, but there was a restless air about him which showed that his patience was tried severely. At length Durham satisfied his appetite, took the edge off it as it were, and then returned to his seat.

"Bernard," he asked, poking the fire, "you never told me that Sir Simon gave you a check for one thousand pounds?"

Gore started up with an exclamation. "What do you mean? I never received such a large check as that in all my life."

"But your grandfather gave you one in September, payable to bearer."

"No. He certainly did not. You forget that we had quarrelled. From the moment I left the Hall some months ago I never received a penny from him. I lived, as you know, on what little money I inherited from my father. You gave fifty pounds to me yourself."

"I went to the bank," said Durham, with an air of

satisfaction, "and asked if such a check had been presented, and by whom?"

"But how did you learn about this check?"

"Oh! I found it amongst Sir Simon's private papers when he died. It had been honored and returned cancelled with the bank-book. I need not have asked if it had been presented, as it had, and had also been paid. But I wanted to examine the whole thing from the beginning. The teller—who knows you—informed me that you presented the check about the beginning of October, and that he paid you the money."

"It is utterly false!" cried Gore, violently.

"Keep your temper, old boy," said Durham, soothingly. "I know that as well as you do. The man who presented the check was dressed as an Imperial Yeoman. He told the teller he had enlisted, and the teller, thinking he was you, wished him good luck."

"But, Mark," said Bernard, much perplexed, "this double of mine must be extraordinarily like me, for the teller knows me well."

"There is a reason for the likeness!" The young man hesitated, wondering if it would be right to tell his friend that Mrs. Gilroy claimed to be the first wife of Walter Gore. On rapid reflection, he decided to say nothing about the matter at present, knowing Bernard's violent temper. He therefore confined himself to bare detail. "Mrs. Gilroy called at my office," he said slowly, "to complain that the one hundred a year left to her by Sir Simon was not enough."

"Oh, confound Mrs. Gilroy," said Gore, impatiently. "I want to know about this check. This double who presented it must be the fellow who masqueraded in the kitchen."

“And perhaps—who knows?—may have murdered Sir Simon.”

“It’s not unlikely. Mrs. Gilroy said she admitted someone like me—or, as she thought, me—about ten, and——”

“We’ll come to that presently. I examined Jane Riordan, who was courted by this fellow apparently to get into the house. She described you exactly, but when I showed her your likeness she noticed that the mole on your chin was absent from the man who met her.”

Bernard involuntarily put up his hand to touch the mole, which was rather conspicuous. “The man had not this mark?” he asked.

“No. So the mole you used to curse at school, Bernard, may be the means of saving your life. Also I got a letter from the girl in which this fellow makes an appointment. Here it is.”

Gore examined the letter thrown to him by Durham—
“It’s like my writing, but it isn’t,” he said, staring—
“In Heaven’s name, Mark, what does it all mean?”

“Conspiracy on the part of——”

“Julius Beryl,” said Gore, breathlessly.

“I am not prepared to say that; but certainly on the part of Mrs. Gilroy. While I was wondering who this double who copied even your handwriting and called himself by your name could be, Mrs. Gilroy called on the errand I told you of.”

“Well? Well?”

“Don’t be impatient, old chap. Well, she demanded more money, and she gave it as her reason for claiming it that your father—” Durham hesitated, wondering how to explain.

"Go on, please," said Gore. "I am on thorns."

"Do you want the truth?"

"Yes, I do. The whole truth."

"Will you promise to keep your temper?"

"Yes. I know I have a bad one, but——"

"Very good. Don't excuse yourself, Bernard. Well, Mrs. Gilroy claimed to be the wife of your father, and——"

Gore started to his feet in a paroxysm of rage. "The wife of my father," he repeated. "Why, my mother is dead."

"She said your mother was not the wife of——"

"Oh!" Bernard sprang to his feet with blazing eyes. "Mark!"

The lawyer rose. "Keep your temper. I didn't intend to tell you, knowing how you would receive the news."

"Does this woman dare to say that I am a—a——"

"Bernard, sit down," said Durham, and literally forced the impetuous boy back into his chair. "Behave like a civilized being. Mrs. Gilroy claims to be your father's first wife."

"But if she lives, and if what she says is true, my mother—I—oh—I could kill this woman."

"Gore," said the lawyer, seriously, "don't talk like this; remember what trouble you are now in owing to your former rash words."

"Yes! Yes!" Bernard struck his forehead hard. "I know—I am a fool. I didn't mean—Mark!"—he started up despite the other's efforts to keep him down—"do you believe this?"

"No," said Durham, promptly, "I don't. If Mrs. Gilroy was the real wife, she would not have kept silent

so long. But I think she was deceived by a pretended marriage, and that Sir Simon, knowing this, helped her. I always wondered what was the bond between them. Now I know. Your father deceived the woman."

"But why do you think she had anything to do with my father at all, Mark? The whole story may be trumped up."

"I am quite sure that her tale is true, save as to the marriage," was Durham's reply. "I don't say that she might not have been deceived with a pretended marriage, and that she thought all was right. But she is not the real wife. Your mother, born Tolomeo is, and you are legitimately Sir Bernard Gore."

"But your reason for thinking she speaks truly?"

"I will give one; a sufficient one. Mrs. Gilroy declared that her son, Michael Gore—so she termed him—was the heir. She explained that there could be no deception, as he is the image of his father."

"Oh!" Bernard started to his feet, seeing light. "And I am the image of my father, as was always said. This man must be——"

"He is. I am sure of that. Michael, your half-brother, is the man resembling you who masqueraded—probably at the instance of his mother. I daresay he saw Sir Simon on that night, and was admitted by his mother. Probably he insisted that he was the heir, and Sir Simon lost his temper. Then he killed the old man, and——"

"And Mrs. Gilroy put the crime on to my shoulders. I see it all."

"I don't," said Durham, dryly. "I wish I did. For instance, I don't see why you were brought to *Crimea Square* in the nick of time for Mrs. Gilroy to accuse

you. I don't understand about the Red Window either!"

Gore walked up and down the room much agitated. "Mark," he cried at last, "I must come out and face this. I can't sit still here, knowing that all this villainy is about."

"You must," insisted Mark, firmly. "Remember I am your lawyer and I will look after your interests, to say nothing of Conniston, who has remained in England for your sake. Wait, Bernard. In good time I will bring you forward."

"But what will you do?"

"I shall see Mrs. Gilroy and question her again. She declared that her son was in America when I accused him to her of having killed Sir Simon. Now Michael undoubtedly presented this check at the beginning of October. The murder took place at the end of the month, so Michael was in England. When I place this fact before Mrs. Gilroy, she may give in and confess."

"Confess what?"

"That you are innocent. Whether she will acknowledge that Michael, her son, committed the crime I can't say. I'll see her to-morrow, and I left word with Miss Randolph to-day that I would. The solution of the mystery lies with Mrs. Gilroy."

"Where can her son be found?"

"That we must learn. I may be able to force her to speak. When we find Michael you can reappear, and then the matter will be threshed out. Jane will soon be able to distinguish between these Corsican Brothers. Meantime, remain quietly here."

"I must! I must! And yet——"

"*And yet you won't think I am doing my best for you.*"

“I do—you know I do, Mark. But, after all, my position is terrible.”

“Don’t make it worse by acting impulsively. I shall keep you advised of all that goes on. When does Conniston return?”

“To-morrow, with Alice and Miss Berengaria. He went over to-day.”

“I saw him there. I expect he will stop the night. Well, while he is here with Miss Malleson and her aunt, I shall see Mrs. Gilroy.”

“But if she refuses to speak,” murmured Gore, anxiously.

“I have means to make her speak,” said Durham, significantly.

CHAPTER XIV

LOVE IN EXILE

Next day at twelve o'clock Durham went back to Hurseton to see Mrs. Gilroy. She alone could relate the true story of the night. But before he left Bernard he related an incident about which he had forgotten to tell him on the previous night.

"Did you ever see your Uncle Guiseppe Tolomeo?" he asked.

"Several times," replied Bernard, with no very pleased expression. "I assisted him with money."

"He is the kind of person who will always have to be assisted," was the lawyer's reply. "I fear he is a scamp, old fellow."

"So my grandfather said. I don't think he is a good man myself. All the same he was my mother's brother, and I must assist him."

"He'll give you every opportunity to do so," said Durham, dryly. "I had a visit from him the other day?"

"What did he want?"

"His errand was similar to that of Mrs. Gilroy's. He wished to know if Sir Simon had made any provision for him in the will. I don't know on what grounds he based his claim, as your grandfather hated him. But he evidently expected to be remembered. I told him he would get nothing, and then with true Italian excitability he began to lament that you had not lived, saying *you would have helped him.*"

"I shall certainly do that. He is my uncle when all is said and done. What is he doing?"

"Playing the violin in some orchestra. The fellow is a gentleman, Bernard, but a thorough scamp. Since he can earn his own bread I don't think it is wise for you to let him live on your money."

"There's no chance at present of my letting him believe I will allow that," said Gore, rather dolefully. "What else did he say?"

"Rather a strange thing. He said that he told Sir Simon that the Red Lamp would not bring you."

"The Red Window, you mean. My uncle knew about that one at the Hall. When my mother was alive, and staying—as she did for a time—with Sir Simon, she used to put a light in the Red Window so as to tell Tolomeo that she would meet him in the garden on that evening. The window is visible through a long avenue, and can easily be seen from the road which runs past the grounds. My poor mother used it as a signal to her brother, as Lucy used it as a signal to me. And I believe that in days gone by—in Charles the First's days—it was used in a like manner to warn loyal cavaliers."

"Tolomeo did not say the Red Window," replied Durham, wrinkling his brows, "but the Red Lamp, which makes me think he must have been with Sir Simon on that fatal evening."

Bernard looked up alertly, and his brow grew dark. "How do you make that out?"

"Well," said Durham, after a pause, "I questioned Jane Riordan again about the possibility of there having been a red light visible!"

"There was," interrupted Gore, decisively. "I saw it myself."

“And Mrs. Webber saw it, although afterwards it disappeared. Well, Jane told me that there was a lamp on the table in front of the window. She saw it when she went up with the cook and Miss Randolph.”

“I remember. I was in the grip of the policeman then,” said Gore.

“Well, it is strange, seeing that the apartment was lighted by electricity, that a lamp should have stood in front of the window.”

“What do you infer?” asked Bernard, doubtfully and uneasily.

“This much. Your cousin told Sir Simon about the use she made of the Red Window—your cousin Miss Randolph, I mean—and when she was at the Curtain Theatre with Beryl, I believe he put the lamp in the window to attract you.”

“Had the lamp a red glass?”

“No. But a red bandana handkerchief such as Sir Simon used might have been stretched across the window. I daresay he did it.”

“But he didn’t know that I knew the house,” objected Gore.

“True enough, unless”—here Durham hesitated—“unless it was your grandfather who sent Jerry Moon to lure you to the square.”

“No! Judas—as Conniston calls him—is Beryl’s tool. I would rather believe that Beryl placed the red handkerchief across the window.”

“There was no handkerchief found,” said Durham. “Mrs. Webber saw the red light, yet when Beryl went out to look for it he could see none, neither could she. What do you infer from that, Bernard?”

“That the handkerchief must have been removed in

the meanwhile by Beryl. No," Bernard recollected, "not by Beryl; Mrs. Gilroy prevented him going up the stairs. But Lucy, the cook and Jane Riordan went up;—one of them must have removed the handkerchief. I tell you what, Mark," added Bernard, thoughtfully, "it was Lucy who placed the lamp by the window and stretched the handkerchief across it."

"We don't know that a handkerchief was so stretched," said Durham.

"It must have been to cause the red light," insisted Gore. "Lucy always had the idea of the Red Window. She was then friendly with Beryl, and she might have made use of Jerry Moon to bring me to the square in the hope that, seeing the red light, I might venture into the house and interview my grandfather."

"Well," said Durham, rising, "we will ask Miss Randolph. Also we can question this young Judas, who is now with Miss Plantagenet."

Bernard did not answer. With his head on his hand he was pondering deeply. "One thing I can't understand," he said, after a pause: "Why do you connect my Uncle Guiseppe with the Red Window?"

"I don't, but with the Red Lamp. In this especial instance, for lack of red glass a lamp was used. It was not the ordinary lighting of the room, remember. Now, Tolomeo must have been in the room, and he must have seen the lamp to make use of such an expression."

"So you believe he was with Sir Simon when Lucy and Beryl were at the theatre?"

"Yes," said Durham, looking directly at Gore, "and Tolomeo is Italian."

Bernard jumped up nervously. "Do you mean to *hint* that Tolomeo may have strangled my grandfather?"

"Yes, I do. Tolomeo may have come to see him—indeed, he must have done so to make use of such an expression as the 'Red Lamp.' The two quarrelled, and perhaps your uncle, losing his temper——"

"No, no! I can't believe that," said Gore, walking anxiously to and fro. "Tolomeo is wild but not wicked."

"That depends on what you call wicked," said Durham, dryly, and preparing to take his leave. "However, we can leave this clue, if clue it is, alone at present. What I have to do is to question Mrs. Gilroy about her son. Also I may see Miss Randolph and Jerry Moon. But of one thing I am certain, Bernard: your grandfather had several visitors during that evening. Your half-brother Michael came, also your uncle. One of the two——"

"No! I would rather believe Mrs. Gilroy strangled the old man herself."

"She is quite capable of doing so," said Durham, coolly, "but I do not think she did. His death was unfortunate for her schemes; he was of more value to her alive than dead. But it might be that Michael killed Sir Simon, and that Mrs. Gilroy is using you as a scape-goat. However, I learn the truth from her to-day."

"If that theory is correct, Tolomeo——"

"Is innocent, quite so. We'll give him the benefit of the doubt. But I want to know what he was doing with Sir Simon on that evening. He may be able to tell us something if he is innocent himself."

Gore shuddered. "It is a most involved case," he said hopelessly.

"I quite agree with you. We have a long dark road to travel before we come to the light. However"——

Durham clapped Bernard on the back—"keep up your spirits. If time, and money, and friendship can put you right, Conniston and I will see the thing through. Meantime, as Miss Malleson is coming here this day, make yourself happy and don't worry."

"You might as well put the kettle on the fire and say don't boil."

Durham shrugged his shoulders and said no more. What with his isolation and anxiety, Bernard was growing morbid, and his only cure lay in the truth being discovered. Therefore Durham set out to discover it from Mrs. Gilroy, and left the young man to his by no means pleasant meditations.

The day was fine and cold, with much sunshine and no mist. Bernard went out for a walk on the small spot of dry ground on which the castle is built. Victoria privately complained to him that she had all the work to do. Since Mrs. Moon had learned "Kings" she would do nothing but play the game. Bernard laughed, and saw the housekeeper, telling her again of the expected arrival of the two ladies.

"You had better get a good luncheon ready," he said.

"I'll try," sighed the giantess; "but that game lies heavy on my conscience. I'm bound to do it at least once, Mr. Grant." She gave Gore his false name in all innocence. "I do wish, sir, you hadn't taught me the game."

"Never mind, you'll do it some day," said Bernard, kindly.

Mrs. Moon moaned and groaned and went to prepare luncheon, her head full of the fatal game, which had seized on her rather sluggish imagination so strongly

as to exclude all other thoughts. Bernard went outside and walked along the causeway which connected the castle with the main road. He wished to welcome Miss Plantagenet and Alice before the two women could see them, as it was necessary to inform them that his name for the time being was Grant. Certainly Conniston might have informed them of this fact; but the young lord was so feather-headed that Bernard did not always trust to his discretion.

Presently an open carriage came in sight driven by Miss Berengaria's fat coachman. Gore heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that they had not brought the dangerous Jerry with them. Evidently Conniston had remembered that part of his instructions.

"Dear Alice," he said, hurrying forward to meet the carriage as it turned down the causeway. And he waved his hat, in return for which token of greeting Alice waved her hand.

But when the lovers met, their hearts were too full to speak. They simply took one another's hands and looked into one another's eyes. Miss Berengaria, alighting at the same time, ordered the carriage to drive to the castle door, and turned to salute the exile. "Well, young man," she said in her bluff way, "a nice mess you have got yourself into."

"Oh no, aunt," protested Alice; "it is not Bernard's fault."

Miss Berengaria rubbed her nose. "Well, I don't know," she observed tartly. "Bernard Gore always had a talent for getting himself into scrapes."

"I hope Mr. Grant is more cautious," said Gore, leading the way to the door with a smile.

"And who is Mr. Grant?" asked Alice, puzzled.

"I am. I have to take a false name because of the servant, Victoria. She is so sharp that she might write and tell Judas I am here."

"Judas!" echoed Miss Berengaria, who, with her dress kilted up, was picking her way amidst the puddles. "Oh, that brat who says he loves fowls and harries mine beyond endurance. I assure you, Bernard, the wretch has spoilt the nerves of the whole poultry yard. I'd give him his walking-ticket if it were not for you. But I'm bound to keep an eye on him, according to Durham. And a nice lawyer he is, with his finiking ways," finished the old lady grimly.

"There is no danger of Jerry getting any letter," said Alice, as they entered the castle. "Aunt looks over all the correspondence. Jerry is behaving himself nicely."

"Except that he's always in places he shouldn't be," said Miss Berengaria. "Deuce take the boy, I don't know what he is after."

"He is on the watch for the arrival of Bernard," said Alice, quietly. "It is for that reason, I am sure, that Julius asked you to take him."

"Bah! Beryl!" Miss Berengaria never was respectful to anyone, much less to Julius, whom she hated. "Beryl doesn't know Gore is alive."

"Yes, he does," began Alice, then checked herself. "I'll tell you later, my dear," she added in a lower tone to Bernard. "I have much to say I don't want my aunt to overhear."

But that lady was too much occupied with Mrs. Moon to listen.

"Well, Moon, how are you?" she said grimly, surveying the giantess. "No younger, I see, and not in good health, I should say."

"What can you expect from damp marshes, my lady?" whimpered Mrs. Moon, who, for some unexplained reason, gave Miss Berengaria this title.

"Rheumatism and ague," said the old dame promptly. "And you look as though you were getting ready for a fever."

"Oh, my lady!"

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" said Miss Berengaria, stalking into the castle. "Have you a good meal ready? If you have, send it up. I'm as hungry as a mosquito after my drive."

"Victoria is laying the table, my lady."

"Who is she? Oh yes. The brat of a girl that urchin of mine talks about. He wants to come over and see her, but I won't let him."

"Why not, my lady? I should like to see my own flesh and blood."

"Well, then, you won't," snapped Miss Berengaria. "And don't you tell Victoria the boy is with me, or I'll discharge him."

"So Mr. Grant said, my lady. He having told me as Jerry was page to your ladyship."

"Hum! It's none of Mr. Grant's business. I can manage my own affairs without his assistance. Come along and show me to a room where I can put my hair tidy; it's blown about by the wind. And see that the coachman feeds the horses. He's a fool."

"I'll see to it, my lady. And Victoria——?"

"Hold your tongue about Victoria."

"I will, my lady. Come this way, my lady," and Mrs. Moon plunged along the corridor with little Miss Berengaria trotting briskly at her heels. She looked like a cock-boat following in the wake of a three-decker. *And all the time she scolded the meek giantess.*

While Mrs. Moon was thus suffering, the lovers were talking eagerly in the sitting-room, where the table was already laid for luncheon. Victoria had departed, so they had the apartment to themselves, and for the moment, in spite of the depressing surrounding circumstances, they were absolutely happy.

"Dearest," said Bernard, taking the girl's hand, "I have hungered for this moment. Alice, you are more beautiful than ever."

"Darling! But, Bernard, I have a confession to make. I really thought for a moment that you were guilty."

"Alice, how could you?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "I was mad to doubt you, dearest, but I did. I thought you might have lost your temper with——"

"Ah!" groaned Gore, "my terrible temper. But when did you come to think me innocent, Alice?"

"Almost immediately. My aunt laughed at the idea that you had killed Sir Simon. She always stood up for you, and scolded me."

"I think you deserved it," said Gore, playfully. "However, I forgive you. The evidence against me is so strong that I don't wonder you believed I was——"

"No, Bernard, no. You loved me, and in the face of everything I should never have credited you with the commission of this crime. But you forgive me, don't you, dear?" she added, nestling to his heart.

"Of course I do," replied Gore, and sealed his forgiveness with a kiss. "So long as you believe me to be innocent now."

"I do—I do. I wonder that I could have doubted you. Lord Conniston never doubted you, nor did Mr.

Durham, nor my aunt. It was only I who—oh dear me! how wicked of me.”

“Alice”—he kissed away her tears—“say no more. The circumstances were enough to shake your faith in me, especially when you knew I had such a bad temper. And I have it still,” sighed Gore, sadly; “even now in spite of all my trouble I am impatient.”

“Wait, wait! All will be well.”

“I can’t see how I am to win free of the trouble, Alice dear.”

“None of us can see, Bernard. But we are in God’s hands. He will help us. See, He has given you a refuge here till your innocence is proved.”

“And how long will I keep this refuge?” said Gore, gloomily. “If that young imp Judas learns from Victoria that I am here——”

“Then you can escape to another place. But, Bernard, I have something to tell you.” Alice looked round and took a letter out of her pocket cautiously. “This is from Julius. He says that he saw you in London.”

“Ah!” Bernard read the letter hurriedly. “My double—my half-brother, Michael.”

“Your half-brother! I never knew you had one.”

“Nor did I, till Durham found it out from Mrs. Gilroy.”

The next ten minutes was taken up by Bernard in explaining what the lawyer had learned from Mrs. Gilroy. Alice was extremely astonished and interested, and quite agreed that it was possible the half-brother might be the guilty person. “And it explains Mrs. Gilroy’s accusation of you,” said Alice, thoughtfully.

“Without doubt. Mrs. Gilroy never liked me. But do you believe Michael is the real heir?”

“No,” said Alice, firmly. “Mrs. Gilroy would have claimed the money and the title for her son had there been a true marriage. There is something wrong, Bernard. I don’t know what it is, but I feel sure that Mrs. Gilroy is not so secure about her position as she pretends to be.”

“Well,” said Bernard, putting the letter into his pocket, “Durham will tell us what she says.”

Then occurred one of those coincidences which occur in real life quite as often as they do in novels. Durham suddenly entered the room, looking disturbed. He saluted Alice, then turned to his client—“Mrs. Gilroy!” he exclaimed.

“What of her?” asked Gore. “Has she confessed?”

“She has left the Hall, and no one knows where she is!”

CHAPTER XV

THE PAST OF ALICE

The lovers stared at Durham when he made this startling announcement, for startling it was, considering how necessary Mrs. Gilroy's evidence was to procure the freedom of Gore. He sat down wiping his face—for he had ridden over post-haste—and looked excessively chagrined.

"When did she go?" asked Bernard, who was the first to find his voice.

"Goodness knows," replied the lawyer in vexed tones. "She left early this morning without saying she was going. Miss Randolph heard the news at breakfast. One of the grooms stated that he had seen Mrs. Gilroy driving in a farmer's trap to the station at Postleigh, about seven o'clock."

"Perhaps she will come back."

"No! She has taken her box with her. She had only one, I believe. I daresay she has taken fright over what she let out to me the other day about that precious son of hers"—here Durham remembered that, so far as he knew, Alice was ignorant of Michael Gore's existence. She interpreted the look.

"You can speak freely, Mr. Durham," she said. "Bernard has just told me all about the matter."

"Good," said the solicitor, evidently relieved, as it did not necessitate his entering into a long explanation, of which he was rather impatient. "Then you know *that Bernard and I suspect Michael Gore—*"

"Do you know anything about her, aunt?"

"Yes, I do, and much more than she likes. She's a gipsy."

"I thought she was," said Durham, remembering the Romany dialect used by the housekeeper, "but she doesn't look like a gipsy."

"Well," said Miss Berengaria, rubbing her nose again and taking a seat, "she's not a real gipsy, but I believe some tribe in the New Forest—the Lovels, I understand—picked her up, and looked after her. All I know of her dates from the time she came to Hurseton with the gipsies. She was then a comely young woman, and I believe Walter Gore admired her."

"My father," said Bernard, coloring.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said the old lady. "I can't say good of your father, and I won't say bad, so let me hold my tongue."

"No," said Durham, rather to the surprise of the others. "Now you have said so much, Miss Plantagenet, you must say all."

"All what?" demanded the old lady, aggressively.

"Well, you see, Mrs. Gilroy claims to have married Walter Gore."

"Then she's a liar," said Miss Berengaria, emphatically and vulgarly. "Why, Walter was married to your mother, Bernard, at that time."

"Are you sure?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course I am. I don't make any statements unless I am sure. It was after the marriage; for Sir Simon—I was friends with him then—consulted me about your father having married the Italian woman—begging your pardon again, Bernard. I then learned the *date of the marriage* and it was quite three years after-

wards that Walter saw Mrs. Gilroy. I don't know what she called herself then. But she disappeared, and I understand from Sir Simon she married Walter under the impression he was a single man—drat the profligate!" added Miss Berengaria.

"Then the son——"

"Son!" echoed the old lady, turning to Durham, who had spoken. "You don't mean to say there is a son?"

"Yes." And Durham, thinking it best to be explicit, gave a detailed account of Mrs. Gilroy's interview. Miss Berengaria listened with great attention, and gave her verdict promptly.

"It's as plain as the nose on my face," she said. "Mrs. Gilroy was really married as she thought, but when she came to see Sir Simon—and that was after the death of both of your parents, my dear," she interpolated, turning to Gore, "she must have learned the truth. I think the old rascal—no, I won't speak evil of the dead—but the good old man"—her hearers smiled at this—"the good old saint was sorry for her. He made her the housekeeper and promised to provide for her after his death."

"Five hundred a year, she says," put in Durham.

"Ah! I can't conceive Simon Gore parting with money to that extent," said Miss Berengaria, dryly, "especially to one who had no claim upon him whatsoever."

"You don't think she had."

"Deuce take the man! Don't I say so? Of course she hadn't. Walter Gore deceived her—begging your pardon for the third time, Bernard—but Sir Simon acted very well by her. I will say that. As to there

being a son, I never heard. But if this—what do you call him?”

“Michael Gilroy.”

“Well, if Michael Gilroy is the image of Bernard, who is the image of his father in looks, though I hope not in conduct, there is no doubt that he was the man admitted by Mrs. Gilroy, who killed Sir Simon. Of course, she will fight tooth and nail for her son. I daresay—I am convinced that it is fear of what she said to you, Mr. Durham, that has made her go away. And a good riddance of bad rubbish, say I,” concluded the old spinster, vigorously, “and for goodness’ sake, where’s the luncheon? I’m starving.”

This speech provoked a laugh, and as everyone’s nerves were rather worn by the position of affairs, it was decided to banish all further discussion until the meal was over. Miss Berengaria without being told took the head of the table. “I represent the family in the absence of that silly young donkey,” she said.

“Oh, Miss Berengaria,” said Bernard, smiling, “if you call Conniston that, what do you call me?”

“A foolish boy, who lost his head when he should have kept it.”

“I lost my heart, at all events!”

Alice laughed, and they had a very pleasant meal. Miss Berengaria was really fond of Gore and of Conniston also, but she liked to—as she put it—take them down a peg or two. But whenever there was trouble, Miss Berengaria, in spite of her sharp tongue, was always to be relied upon. Her bark was five times as bad as her bite, therefore those present made all allowance for her somewhat free speech.

“We start back at half-past four,” announced the old

lady, when the luncheon was ended, "as I don't like driving in the dark. It is now four, so you have just time to talk over what is to be done."

"What do you advise, Miss Berengaria?" asked Durham.

"I advise Bernard to give himself up, and face the matter out."

"Oh, aunt!" cried Alice, taking her lover's hand.

"My dear, this hole-and-corner business is no good. And the discovery of the likeness between Michael and Bernard brings a new element into play. If Bernard lets himself be arrested, the whole business can be threshed out in daylight. Besides, as we stand now, that Beryl creature—drat him!—will make mischief."

"He has found out that Bernard is alive," said Alice.

"That's impossible!" cried Durham, waking up and sitting apparently on thorns. "He doesn't know Bernard is at this Castle."

"Alice has put the matter wrongly," said Bernard, taking out the letter of Beryl. "She received this from Julius. He says he saw me in the streets of London. That means he saw Michael Gilroy."

"Ah! And made the mistake, as everyone else seems to have done."

"I doubt that, Alice," said Miss Plantagenet, "I doubt that very much. It seems to me that Beryl—drat him!—knows a great deal more than we do. It's my opinion," added the old lady, looking round triumphantly, "that Beryl has used Michael as an instrument."

"I think so also," said Durham, quickly, "and it comes to this, that if I accidentally met Michael, or if he called *at my office* representing himself as Bernard, *I should accept him as such.*"

“What for?” asked Bernard, angrily.

“There you go with your temper,” said Miss Berengaria. “Durham is quite right and shows more sense than I expected from him. The only way to get at the truth—which this Michael with his mother knows—is to give him a long enough rope to let him hang himself. I daresay if Durham won his confidence, the man might presume on his being accepted as Bernard, and might give us a clue. What do you say, Alice? Don’t sit twiddling your thumbs, but answer.”

Miss Malleson laughed. “I agree with you, aunt.”

“Of course you do. Am I ever wrong? Well?” She looked round.

Durham answered her look. “I will go back to London,” he said, “and will advertise for Mrs. Gilroy——”

“She won’t be such a fool as to obey.”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Plantagenet; she may.”

“She won’t, I tell you.”

“Then Michael may come.”

“What! with that murder hanging over his head? Rubbish!”

“You forget Bernard is accused. Michael can clear himself.”

Miss Berengaria snorted and rubbed her nose. “Can he? then I should very much like to know how he can. Do what you like, young man, but mark my words: your net will catch no fish.”

“It may catch Beryl,” said Bernard, thoughtfully. “When he sees Mark advertising he will be on the lookout.”

“To have Michael arrested as Bernard,” said Miss Berengaria. “Well, he might. And if so, all the better for you, Gore. Oh dear me”—she rose to put on her bonnet—“what a lot of trouble all this is.”

“ And it rose from Bernard being true to me,” said Alice, tenderly.

“ As if you weren’t worth the world,” said Bernard, assisting her to put on her cloak.

“ Eh, what’s that? ” said the old lady. “ Hum! Bernard, your grandfather was a silly fool—no, I won’t say that—but he was an upsetting peacock. The idea of not thinking Alice good enough for you! ”

“ She is too good for me.”

“ I quite agree with you,” said the lawyer, laughing; “ but you see, Miss Berengaria, it was not the personality of Miss Malleson that Sir Simon objected to, but her——”

“ I know—I know,” said the old lady tartly. “ Bless the man, does he take me for an idiot.” She sat down. “ I’m a fool.”

Everyone looked at one another when Miss Berengaria made this startling announcement. As a rule, she called others fools, but she was chary of applying the term to herself. She looked round. “ I am a fool,” she announced again. “ Alice, come and sit down. I have something to say that should have been said long ago.”

“ What is it? ” asked the girl, seating herself beside the old lady. Miss Berengaria, a rare thing for her, began to weep. “ The air here is too strong for me,” she said in excuse. “ All the same, I must speak out even through my tears, silly woman that I am! Oh, if I hadn’t been too proud to explain to that dead peacock ”—she meant the late baronet—“ all this would have been avoided.”

“ Do you mean my grandfather would have consented to the *marriage*? ”

"I mean nothing of the sort, Bernard, so don't interrupt," said Miss Berengaria, sharply, "but I'm a fool. Bernard, I beg your pardon."

"If you would come to the point, Miss Plantagenet, and——"

"I am coming to it, Durham," she said quickly. "Don't worry me. It is this way: Sir Simon objected to Alice because he knew nothing of her parentage."

"I know nothing myself," said Alice, sadly.

"Well then, I intend to tell you now. You are perfectly well born and you have every right to the name of Malleson, though why Sir Simon thought you hadn't I can't say. Give me your hand, my love, and I'll tell you who you are as concisely as possible."

Alice did as she was told, and Miss Plantagenet began in a hurry, as though anxious to get over a disagreeable task. Durham and Bernard listened with all their ears. Miss Berengaria noticed this.

"You needn't look so eager," she said tartly; "the story is dull. Alice, do you remember that I told you I was engaged once to a wicked fool?"

"Yes—you said——"

"There's no need to repeat what I said. I am quite sure it isn't edifying. I have far too long a tongue, but old age will be garrulous—drat it! Well then, Alice that man who said he loved me and lied was your grand father. He married a girl with money, for then I had only my looks, and I *was* handsome," said Miss Berengaria, emphatically; "but George—his name was George and I've hated it ever since—didn't want beauty or brains. He wanted money, and got it, along with a weeping idiot whose heart he broke. I swore never to look on a man again, and when my father died I came

to live at The Bower. But I heard that George's wife had died, leaving him one daughter——”

“That was me,” said Alice, hastily.

“Nothing of the sort. I said that George—his other name doesn't matter at present, although it can be mentioned if necessary—I said that George was your grandfather. The daughter grew up and married your father, who was a colonel in the Indian army. But both your parents died when you were young. I received you from your dying mother's arms and I sent you to a convent. I couldn't bear the sight of you for months,” said the old lady, energetically. “You have a look of handsome George, and handsome he was. Well then, when you grew up and behaved yourself, I took you from the convent, and you have been with me ever since.”

“You are my second mother,” said Alice, embracing her.

“The first—the only mother,” said Miss Berengaria, sharply. “You never knew any mother but me, and as your grandfather defrauded me of my rights to marry, I look upon you as my child.”

“But why did you not tell this perfectly plain story to Sir Simon?”

“Why didn't I, Durham?” asked Miss Berengaria tearfully. “You may well ask that. Pride, my dear—pride. Sir Simon and I were in society together. He wanted to marry me, and I refused. So I never became your grandmother, Bernard, and I certainly should never have had a son like your father, who is——”

“Don't. He is my father after all.”

“Was, you mean, seeing he is dead. Well, my dear boy, I'll *say nothing* about him. But Sir Simon loved

me and I preferred George, who was a villain. I couldn't bear to think that Sir Simon should know I had forgotten my anger against George to the extent of helping his grand-daughter. An unworthy feeling you all think it—of course—of course. But I am a woman, when all is said and done, my dears. And another thing—Simon Gore was too dictatorial for me, and I wasn't going to give any explanation. Besides which, had he known Alice, that you were George's grand-daughter—and he hated George—he would have been more set against the marriage than ever. And now you know what a wicked woman I have been."

"Not wicked, aunt," said Alice, kissing the withered cheek.

"Yes, wicked," said Miss Berengaria, sobbing, "I should have told the truth and shamed the—I mean shamed Sir Simon. Perhaps I could have arranged the marriage had I subdued my pride into obeying Sir Simon. But I couldn't, and he was angry, and all these troubles have arisen out of my silly silence."

"Oh, no," said Bernard, sorry for her distress.

"Oh, yes," cried the old lady, rising and drying her tears. "Don't you contradict me, Bernard. If I had told the truth and let Sir Simon know that Alice was well born, he might have consented."

"Not if he knew that Alice was George's grand-daughter."

Miss Berengaria tossed her head. "I don't know," she said, moving towards the door. "I might have managed him, obstinate as he was. But if Sir Simon had not been angry, he would not have sent you away, Bernard, and then all this rubbish about the Red Window would not have drawn you to that dreadful

house, to be accused of a wicked crime. But, oh dear me! what's the use of talking? Here are the horses standing all this time at the door, and it's getting on to five. Alice, come home," and Miss Berengaria sailed out wrathfully.

The others looked at one another and smiled. Then Durham left the lovers alone and went to assist Miss Berengaria into the carriage.

She was already in and caught his hand. "Spare no expense to help that dear boy," she whispered. "He must be set free. And, for goodness sake, tell Alice to come at once. Why is she drivelling there?"

"Love! Miss Berengaria, love!"

"Stuff!" said the old lady, "and a man of your age talking so. Good-bye. Alice, are you comfortable? James, drive on, and don't upset us."

CHAPTER XVI

THE UNEXPECTED

Miss Berengaria's servants had been with her for a long time and were all eminently respectable. She was—needless to say—very good to them, and they adored and obeyed her in quite a feudal manner. When at supper in the servants' hall—all old and all sedate—they might have been a company of Quakers from the sobriety of their demeanor. The head of the table was taken by the cook, and the foot by James the coachman. Those two were married and were both fat, both devoted to Miss Berengaria, and both rulers of the other servants. The coachman swayed the little kingdom of domestics with his stout wife as queen.

On the very evening Miss Plantagenet came back from Cove Castle, the servants were enjoying a good supper, and James was detailing the events of the day. After this his wife narrated what had taken place during his absence. And at the side of the table sat Jerry, looking the picture of innocence, occupied with his bread and cheese, but taking everything in. The information conveyed to James by the cook related to several tramps that had called, and to the killing of two fowls by a fox terrier that belonged to a neighbor.

“And a nice rage the missus will be in over them,” said cook.

“You should have set Sloppy Jane on the terrier,” said James. “Our poultry is prize birds and worth a

dozen of them snappy dogs as bite the heels of respectable folk."

"Sloppy Jane was with me," said a sedate housemaid. "A tramp came to the gate asking for Miss Alice, and I couldn't get him away."

"What did he want with Miss Alice?" demanded James, aggressively.

"Ah, what indeed!" said the housemaid. "I told him Miss Alice wouldn't speak to the like of him. But he looked a gentleman, though he had a two days' beard and was dressed in such rags as you never saw."

"Did he go, Sarah?"

"Oh, yes, he went in a lingering sort of way, and I had to tie Jane up in case she'd fly on him. I didn't want that."

"Why not?" said the coachman, dictatorially. "Tramps is tramps."

Sarah pondered. "Well, cook and James, it's this way," she said, with some hesitation. "This murder of old Sir Simon—" Jerry pricked up his ears at this and looked more innocent than ever.

"Go on," said the cook, wondering why Sarah stopped.

"They said his grandson done it."

"And that I'll never believe," cried James, pounding the table. "A noble young gentleman Mr. Bernard, and many a half-crown he's given me. He never did it, and even if he did, he's dead and gone."

Sarah drew back from the table. "I really forgot that," she whimpered. "It must have been his ghost," and she threw her apron over her head.

"What's that, Sarah? A ghost! There's no such thing. Whose ghost?"

"Oh! I'm fly, Mr. James," said Jerry, easily; "but who is Mr. Bernard? and why did he kill Sir Simon?"

"He didn't, and he's the present baronet at the Hall, young Jerry. You don't chatter or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Oh, he won't talk," said the good-natured cook. "He's an angel."

Sarah snorted. She was not so impressed with Jerry's angelic qualities as the rest of the company. However, Jerry, who had his own reasons to retire, slipped away unostentatiously and read Victoria's letter for the second time. Then he talked to himself in a whisper.

"He's alive after all," he said, "and he's stopping at that castle. I daresay the old girl"—he thus profanely described his mistress—"went over to there to see him with Miss Alice. And they brought him back, dropping him on the way so that he could get into the house quietly. He knows my whistle. No one but him could know it, as he heard me on that night. What's to be done? I'll go out and have a look round. He may come back again."

Jerry was too young to be so exact as he should be. There were several flaws in his argument. But he was too excited to think over these. It never struck him that Miss Plantagenet could have smuggled Gore easier into the house by bringing him in her carriage after swearing James to secrecy, than by letting him approach the house in the character of a tramp. But it was creditable to the lad's observation that he so quickly conjectured the mysterious stranger at the castle should be Bernard. Jerry knew that Conniston was a close friend of Gore's, and saw at once that Bernard had

sought the refuge of the castle where he would remain undiscovered. But for Victoria's hint Jerry would never have guessed this. It was his duty to communicate this knowledge to Beryl, but for reasons of his own connected with the chance of a reward or a bribe to hold his tongue, from someone who could pay better than Beryl—say Lord Conniston—Jerry determined to wait quietly to see how things would turn out. Meanwhile he strolled round to the fowls, where he thought it likely the tramp—if he was a tramp—might come. If not a tramp he might come this way also as the easiest to enter the grounds.

The poultry yard was carved out of a large meadow by the side of the gardens. It ran back a considerable distance from the high road, and at the far end was fenced with a thin plantation of elms. Wire netting and stout fences surrounded the yard, and there was a gate opening on to the meadow aforesaid. Jerry hovered round these precincts watching, but he did not expect any luck. However, the boy, being a born bloodhound, waited for the sheer excitement of the thing.

Now it happened that Miss Berengaria had left the house of a pair of Cochin fowls unlocked. She would have gone out to lock it herself but that she was so weary. All the same, she would not delegate the duty to her servants, as she considered they might not execute the commission properly. Finally Alice offered to go, and, after putting on a thick waterproof and a large pair of rubber boots which belonged to Miss Plantagenet, she ventured out. Thus it was that she paddled round to the yard with a lantern and came into the neighborhood of Jerry. That suspicious young man immediately thought she had heard of Bernard's coming

and had come out to meet him. He snuggled into a corner near the gate and watched as best he could in the darkness.

It was pouring rain, and the sky was black with swiftly-moving clouds. These streamed across the face of a haggard-looking moon, and in the flaws of the wind down came the rain in a perfect drench.

Alice, with her dress drawn up, a lantern in one hand and an umbrella of the Gamp species extended above her head, ventured into the yard, and locked up the precious fowls. Then she came back round by the gate to see if it was barred. To her surprise it was open. Rather annoyed she closed it again, and put up the bar. Then she took her way round by the side of the house to enter by the front door.

Jerry followed with the step of a red Indian. He was rewarded.

Just as Alice turned the corner of the house, she heard a groan, and almost stumbled over a body lying on the flower-bed under the wall of the house. At first she gave a slight shriek, but before she could step back the man clutched her feet—"Alice! Alice!" moaned the man. "Save me!—it's Bernard."

"Bernard here," said Alice, with a shudder, and wondered how he had come from the castle. She turned the light on to his face, and then started back. This was not Bernard.

In the circle of light she saw—and Jerry slinking along the side of the fence saw also—a pale, thin face with a wild look on it. The hair was long and matted, there was a scrubby growth on the chin, and the eyes were sunken for want of food. Still it was Bernard's face, and but that she had seen him on that very after-

noon, she would have been deceived, until she had made a closer acquaintance with the tramp. But Alice, having heard the story of Mrs. Gilroy's son, knew at once that this miserable creature was Michael. He was representing himself to her as Bernard, and, mindful of Durham's advice, after the first start of alarm she determined to treat him as though she believed he was her lover.

"Can you get to your feet?" she said, touching him, although her soul shuddered within her when she thought what the man had done.

"Yes," said Michael, hoarsely, and tried to rise.

She assisted him to his feet but his weight almost made her sink. "I must get the servants," said she, trying to disengage herself.

"No! no!" said the man in a voice of hoarse terror. "They will give me up. Remember what I have done."

Alice did remember indeed, and shuddered again. But it was needful for the clearing of Bernard that she should carry on the comedy so as to detain the man. A word from her, that she knew who he really was, and he would fly at once—when all chance of saving Gore would be at an end. Therefore she half led, half dragged him round the corner of the house in the driving rain. Jerry waited till the two disappeared and the last gleam of the lantern vanished. Then he went back to the kitchen unconcernedly.

"Where have you been?" asked James, sternly.

"Looking to see if the poultry gate was all right," said Jerry. "You see, Mr. James, a tramp might come in there."

"It was your duty to shut it."

"I have shut it," said Jerry, with assumed sulkiness.

“But, aunt, the servants—”

“They will hold their tongues. I’ll see to that.”

“Bless you,” murmured the half stupefied man. “I can’t thank you for—Oh! if you only knew all! I want to tell you something.”

“Never mind just now,” said the old lady, sharply. “Try and get up the stairs supported by Alice and myself. Then we’ll put you to bed and give you something to eat.”

“Will I be safe?” asked the man, looking round anxiously.

“Quite safe. Do you think I would let you be taken, Bernard?” said Alice, although her soul sickened in her at the deception.

“I—trust—you,” said Michael, with a strange look at her. “I am ill and dirty, and—and—but you know I am Bernard,” he burst out in a pitiful kind of way.

“Yes, of course you are. Anyone can see that,” said Miss Berengaria, as Alice didn’t answer. “Help him up, Alice.”

The two dragged the man up the stairs painfully, he striving his best to make his weight light. Miss Berengaria approved of this. “He’s got good stuff in him,” she said, when they led him into the small room, which took up the whole of the second floor of the turret.

“He always had,” said Alice, warmly, and for the sake of the comedy.

But Miss Berengaria frowned. She applied what she said to Michael.

Then Miss Berengaria sent Alice downstairs to heat some wine, and made Michael go to bed. He was as weak as a child, and simply let her do what she liked. With some difficulty she managed to put him between

the sheets, and then washed his face and hands. Finally, on Alice returning with the wine and some bread, she fed him with sops of the latter dipped into the former. After this, as Michael displayed symptoms of drowsiness, she prepared to leave him to a sound sleep. "And Payne shall see you to-morrow."

"But I'll be safe—safe," said the sick man, half starting up.

"Of course. Lie down and sleep."

Michael strove to say something, then sank back on his pillows. The two hurried out of the room and down the stairs feeling like conspirators. Not until they were safe in the drawing-room with the door closed did they venture to speak, and then only did so in whispers. Alice was the first to make a remark.

"If I hadn't seen Bernard this very day, I should have been deceived, aunt. Did you ever see so wonderful a likeness?"

"Never," admitted Miss Berengaria. "But how the deuce"—she was always a lady given to strong expressions—"does the man expect to pass himself off to you as Bernard? There's lots of things Bernard has said about which he must know nothing."

"I can't understand it myself. Perhaps he came to tell the truth."

"Humph!" Miss Berengaria rubbed her nose. "I don't think a man who would commit a murder would tell the truth. My flesh creeped when I touched him. All the same, there's pluck in the fellow. A pity he is such a scamp. Something might be made of him."

"Do you think he has got himself up like this to—"

"No, no!" snapped Miss Plantagenet, "the man's illness is *genuine*. I can see for myself, he's only skin

and bone. I wonder how he came to be in such a plight?"

"Perhaps he will tell us."

"He'll tell lies," said the old lady, grimly. "And for the sake of Bernard we'll pretend to believe him. Wait till I get Durham on to him. He won't lie then. But the main point is to keep him. He is the only person who can get Bernard out of the trouble."

"What shall we do, aunt?"

"Nurse him up in that room, telling the servants that we have a guest. They need not see him. And Payne can cure him. When he is cured we will see what Durham says. That young man's clever. He will know how to deal with the matter. It's beyond me. Now we must go to bed. My head is in a whirl with the excitement of this day."

CHAPTER XVII

THE DIARY

Before Miss Berengaria could communicate with Durham, he had left the castle for town. On hearing this from Bernard, the old lady at once sent up to him a full report of the arrival of Michael at the Bower under the name of Gore.

“He is now a trifle better,” wrote Miss Berengaria, “but having suffered from great privations he is still ill, and, so far as I can see, is likely to keep to his bed for some time. Payne is attending to him and says he needs careful nursing and tonics. He is so weak as to be scarcely able to talk, which is perhaps all the better, as Alice and I might arouse his suspicions. We have accepted him as Bernard, and when you come down you can question him either in that character or as Michael. To tell you the truth, I am sorry for the boy—he is only twenty-one or thereabouts, and I think he has been misguided. After all, even he may not have committed the crime, although he was certainly with Sir Simon on that fatal night. The servants—with the exception of my own especial maid, Maria Tait—know nothing of the man’s presence in the turret chamber. And you may be sure that I am taking care Jerry Moon learns nothing. But I shall be glad when you can come down to take the matter out of my hands. I am much worried over it. Conniston comes over daily to see Lucy Ran-

dolph at the Hall, but he is so feather-brained a creature that I don't care about entrusting such a secret to him. Nor do I wish Bernard to know. With his impetuosity, he would probably come over at once, and run the chance of arrest. The whole matter is in your hands, Durham, so write and tell me what I am to do. At all events I have a fast hold of Bernard's double, and you may be sure I shall not allow him to go until this mystery is cleared up."

In reply to this pressing epistle, Durham wrote, telling Miss Berengaria to wait for three or four days. He was advertising for Tolomeo, and hoped to see him at his office. If, as Durham thought, the Italian had been with Sir Simon on that night, something might be learned from him likely to prove the presence of Michael in the room. The examination of Michael—which Durham proposed to make, would then be rendered much easier. The lawyer, in conclusion, quite agreed with Miss Plantagenet that Conniston and Bernard should not be told. "I hope to be with you by the end of the week," he finished.

"Deuce take the man," said Miss Berengaria, rubbing her nose. "Does he think I can wait all that time?"

"I don't see what else you can do, aunt," said Alice, when the letter was read. "And this poor creature *is* so weak, that I do not think he will be able to *speak* much for a few days. All we have to do is to *nurse* him and ask no questions."

"And to let him think we believe him to be Bernard."

"Oh, he is quite convinced of that," said Alice,

quickly. "I suppose he hoped I would think his altered looks might induce me to overlook any lack of resemblance to Bernard."

"Yes, but he must guess when you talk you will find him out, seeing you know much of Bernard that he cannot know."

"Perhaps that is why he holds his tongue," said Alice, rising. "But we must wait, aunt."

"I suppose we must," said Miss Berengaria, dolefully. "Drat the whole business! Was there ever such a coil?"

"Well then, aunt, will you leave it alone?"

"Certainly not. I intend to see the thing through. Owing to my reticence to Sir Simon about your parents, Alice, I am really responsible for the whole business, so I will keep working at it until Bernard is out of danger and married to you."

"Ah!" sighed Miss Malleston. "And when will that be?"

"Sooner than you think, perhaps. Every day brings a surprise."

One day certainly brought a surprise to Lucy Randolph. She learned that Conniston loved her, though, to be sure, his frequent visits might have shown her how he was losing his heart. She was glad of this as she admired Conniston exceedingly, and, moreover, wished to escape from her awkward position at the Hall. When Bernard came back and married Alice, she would have to leave the Hall and live on the small income allotted to her by the generosity of the dead man. It would be much better, as she truly thought, to marry Conniston, even though he was the poorest of peers. One can do a lot with a title even without money, and

Lucy was wise in her generation. Moreover, she was truly in love with the young man, and thought, very rightly, that he would make her a good husband.

As usual, Conniston, having taken into his head that Lucy would be an ideal wife, pursued his suit with characteristic impetuosity. He came over daily—or almost daily—to Gore Hall, and, finally, when Lucy broke off her engagement to Beryl, he told her of the whereabouts of Bernard. Lucy was overwhelmed and delighted.

“To think that he should be alive after all,” she said. “I am so pleased, so glad. Dear Bernard, now he will be able to enjoy the fortune and the title, and marry Alice.”

“You forget,” said Conniston, a trifle dryly, “Bernard has yet to prove his innocence. We are all trying to help him. Will you also give a hand, Miss Randolph?”

Lucy stared at him with widely-open eyes. “Of course I will, Lord Conniston,” she said heartily. “What do you wish me to do?”

“In the first place, tell me if you sent a boy to bring Bernard to Crimea Square?”

“No. I know the boy you mean. He is a lad called Jerry Moon. Julius found him selling matches in town, ragged and poor. He helped him, and the other day he procured him a situation with Miss Berengaria.”

“He is there now. But he—we have reason to believe—is the boy who lured Bernard to Crimea Square.”

“I know nothing about that,” said Lucy, frankly. “Why not ask the boy himself? It would be easy.”

“We will ask the boy shortly,” replied Conniston,

evasively, not wishing at this juncture to tell her that the great object of everyone was to prevent Jerry thinking he was suspected. "Should you meet the boy say nothing to him."

"I will not, and I am not likely to meet the boy. He is usually in Miss Plantagenet's poultry yard, and I rarely go round there." Lucy paused. "It is strange that the boy should act like that. I wonder if Sir Simon sent him to fetch Bernard, and arranged the Red Window as a sign which house it was?"

"The Red Window. Ah yes! Mrs. Webber saw the light, and——"

"And Julius afterwards didn't. I know that. It was my fault. When we drove up in the carriage on that terrible night I saw the Red Light, and wondered if Sir Simon had arranged it as a sign to Bernard. When I saw Bernard in the hall I was not astonished, for I thought he had come in answer to the light. I went upstairs, and after attending to Sir Simon, I went to the window. The lamp was before it, and stretched across the pane was a red bandanna handkerchief of Sir Simon's. I took that away, so you see how it was Julius did not see the light."

"Why did you remove the handkerchief?" asked the puzzled Conniston.

"Well, I wanted to save Bernard if possible, and I thought if the Red Light which had drawn him were removed, he could make some excuse. Julius knew about the Red Light, and, as he hated Bernard, I fancied he would use it against him. But really," added Miss Randolph, wrinkling her pretty brows, "I hardly knew what I was doing, save that in some vague way I fancied the removal of the handkerchief might help Bernard. Is that clear?"

“Perfectly clear,” said Conniston, “and I am glad I know this. May I tell Bernard and Durham?”

“Certainly. I want to do all I can to help Bernard.”

“Ah, you are a good woman,” said Conniston, eagerly. “I wonder if you could make a chap good?”

“It depends upon the chap,” said Lucy, shyly.

“I know a chap who——”

“Please stop, Lord Conniston,” cried Lucy, starting up in confusion. “I have heaps and heaps to do. You prevent my working.”

Her hurried flight prevented Conniston from putting the question on that occasion. But he was not daunted. He resolved to propose as soon as possible. But Lucy thought he was making love too ardently, and by those arts known to women alone, she managed to keep him at arm's length. She was anxious that Bernard should be cleared, that he should take up his rightful position, and should receive back the Hall from her, before Lord Conniston proposed. Of course, Lucy was ready to accept him, but, sure of her fish, she played with him until such time as she felt disposed to accept his hand and heart and title and what remained of the West fortune. Conniston, more determined than ever to win this adorable woman, came over regularly. But Lucy skilfully kept him off the dangerous ground, whereby he fell deeper in love than ever. Then one day, she appeared with a blue-covered book, the contents of which so startled them that love-making was postponed to a more convenient season.

“Fancy,” said Lucy, running to meet Conniston one afternoon as soon as he appeared at the drawing-room door, “I have found the diary of Mrs. Gilroy.”

"That's a good thing," said Conniston, eagerly. "She knows more of the truth than anyone else. We must read her diary."

"Will that be honorable?" said Lucy, retaining her hold of the book.

"Perfectly. One does not stand on ceremony when a man's neck is at stake. Mrs. Gilroy's diary may save Bernard's life. She knew too much about the murder, and fled because she thought Durham would come and question her."

"Oh! Was that why she ran away?"

"Yes! A woman like Mrs. Gilroy does not take such a course for nothing. She's a clever woman."

"And a very disagreeable woman," said Lucy, emphatically. "But what did she know?"

Conniston wriggled uneasily. He was not quite certain whether he ought to tell Lucy all that had been discovered, and, had he not been in love with her, he would probably have held his tongue. But, after some reflection, he decided to speak out. "You are, of course, on Bernard's side," he said.

"Yes. And against Julius, who hates Bernard. I will do anything I can to help Bernard. I am sure you can see that," she added in a most reproachful manner.

"I know—I know. You are the truest and best woman in the world," said Conniston, eagerly, "but what I have to tell you is not my own secret. It concerns Bernard."

"Then don't tell me," said Lucy, coloring angrily.

"Yes, I will. You have the diary and I want to read it. To know why I do, it is necessary that you should learn all that we have discovered."

"What have you discovered? Who killed Sir Simon?"

"No. We are trying to hunt down the assassin. And Mrs. Gilroy's diary may tell us."

"I don't see that."

"You will, when you learn what I have to say." And Conniston related everything concerning the false marriage and the half-brother of young Gore. "And now, you see," he finished triumphantly, "Mrs. Gilroy is fighting for her son. It is probable that she has set down the events of that night in her diary."

"She would not be such a fool, if her son is guilty."

"Oh, people do all manner of queer things. Criminals who are very secretive in speech sometimes give themselves away in writing. You were at the theatre on that night?"

"Yes, with Julius; so neither of us had anything to do with the matter, if that is what you mean."

"I mean nothing of the sort," said Conniston, quickly. "How can you think I should suspect you?"

"You might suspect Julius," said Lucy, suspiciously, "and although we have quarrelled I don't want to harm him."

"Would you rather have Bernard hanged?"

"Oh!" Lucy burst into tears and impulsively threw the book into Conniston's lap. "Read it at once; I would rather save Bernard than Julius."

Conniston availed himself of this permission at once. He took away the diary with Lucy's permission, and carried it in triumph to the castle. Here he and Bernard sat down to master its contents. These astonished them considerably. Conniston made out a short and concise account of the events of that fatal night, for the benefit of Durham. They were as follows:

Mrs. Gilroy, it appears, thought that her son,

Michael, was really and truly in America. She had no suspicion that the lover of Jane Riordan was her son, but truly believed from the description that he was young Gore whom she hated—as she plainly stated in several pages. When the presumed Bernard went away before six, he did not call again at ten o'clock. The man that called, Mrs. Gilroy asserted, was Bernard, and not her son. He saw Sir Simon and after a stormy interview he departed.

“Why then doesn't she accuse me of the crime?” said Gore.

“Wait a bit,” said Conniston, who was reading his precis. “This diary is meant for her eye alone. Still, she may have thought it might fall into the hands of another person, and therefore made her son safe. Michael called before ten—for then, Bernard, you were with Durham and myself. Michael saw Sir Simon, and then Mrs. Gilroy, pretending the man was you, says he departed, leaving your grandfather alive. See! here's the bit,” and he read, “Sir Simon was alive after Mr. Gore left the house.”

“Go on,” said Bernard. “If I am innocent, why did she accuse me?”

“Because I believe her son is guilty. He left Sir Simon dead. Mrs. Gilroy found the body, knew what had occurred, and then ran out on hearing Jerry's whistle knowing she would meet you. It's all plain.”

“Very plain,” said Gore, emphatically. “A regular trap. Go on.”

“Afterwards, and shortly before a quarter past ten, there came a ring at the door. Mrs. Gilroy went, and there she found Signor Tolomeo, who asked to see Sir Simon. She took him up the stairs, and left him to *peak with Sir Simon*. What took place she did not

know, but she was sitting below working, and heard the door close. It was just before a quarter to eleven that she heard this."

"About the time I came," muttered Bernard.

Mrs. Gilroy—as appeared from the diary—ran up to see if the master was all right. She found him strangled, and with the handkerchiefs tied over his mouth and round his neck. Then she ran out and found Gore at the door. He had come back again, and Mrs. Gilroy said she accused him. She then stated in her diary that she looked upon Bernard as an accessory after the fact. He had hired Guiseppe Tolomeo to kill his grandfather, and then came to see if the deed had been executed thoroughly. Mrs. Gilroy ended her diary by stating that she would do her best to get both the Italian and his nephew hanged.

"Very much obliged to her," said Bernard, when Conniston concluded reading, and beginning to walk to and fro. "Well, it seems my uncle is the guilty person, Conniston."

"I don't believe it," said Dick, firmly. "Mrs. Gilroy is trying to shield her son. I believe he killed him."

"If we could only find Michael," said Bernard, dolefully.

"Ah! Things would soon be put right then," replied Conniston, and neither was aware that the man they wished to see was at that very moment lying in the turret chamber at the Bower, "or even Mrs. Gilroy. Could we see her, and show her the diary, she might put things straight."

"I believe she left the diary behind on purpose," said Gore, with some ill-humor. "I can't believe that Tolomeo killed Sir Simon."

"What kind of man is he?"

"A very decent chap in his own way. His blood is hot, and he has a temper something like the one I have inherited from my mother, who was Guiseppe's sister. But Tolomeo is not half bad. He has the credit for being a scamp, but I don't think he deserves it."

"Can't you see him and show him the diary?"

"No. I don't know his whereabouts. However, Durham, at my request, has put an advertisement in the papers which may bring him to the office, then we can see how much of this story is true. Certainly, Mrs. Gilroy may have seen him at the house on that night."

"What would he go for?"

"To ask my grandfather for money. He was always hard up. Sir Simon hated him, but if Guiseppe was hard up he wouldn't mind that. I daresay Tolomeo did see Sir Simon, and did have a row, as both he and grandfather were hot-blooded. But I don't believe my uncle killed Sir Simon," said Bernard, striking the table.

"Well," drawled Conniston, slipping his precis and the diary itself into an envelope, "I don't see what he had to gain. Tolomeo, from your account of him, would not commit a murder without getting some money from doing it. But the best thing to do, is to take this up to Durham and see what he thinks."

"I'll come too," said Gore, excitedly. "I tell you, Dick, I'm dead tired of doing nothing. It will be better to do what Miss Berengaria suggests and give myself up."

"Wait a bit," persuaded Dick. "Let me take this up to Durham, and if he agrees you can be arrested."

Bernard was unwilling to wait, but finally he yielded sullenly to Conniston's arguments. Dick with the precious *parcel* went up to town alone, and Bernard did *what he could to be patient.*

CHAPTER XVIII

TOLOMEO'S STORY

Durham was much excited when he read the account which Conniston had extracted from Mrs. Gilroy's diary. However, he declined to give an opinion until he read the diary itself. He then told Dick that the discovery had been made in the nick of time.

"The Italian is coming to see me to-morrow," he said, showing a letter. "I advertised that he would hear of something to his advantage if he called, as Bernard wants to help him. When he comes, you may be sure that I shall get the truth out of him."

"Do you think he's guilty, Mark?"

"It is hard to say," replied Durham, shaking his head. "The whole case is so mixed that one doesn't know who is guilty or innocent."

"Save Bernard," put in Conniston, lighting a cigarette.

"Certainly. However, we may learn something of the truth from——"

"Not Mrs. Gilroy," said Conniston quickly, "unless you have succeeded in finding her."

"No, I have not been so lucky. She has vanished altogether. But Beryl may be able to tell something."

"But he won't."

"I am not so sure of that. We have Jerry in our *hands*, and that young scamp is in the employment of *Beryl*. He will have to explain how the boy came to

lure Bernard to Crimea Square in time to be accused."

"Why not ask Jerry?"

"Because Jerry would immediately run away. No, I'll wait. Perhaps Michael may speak out. He's ill enough."

"Michael?" echoed Conniston in amazement. "What of him?"

"Oh, the dickens!" said Durham in quite an unprofessional way, and stood up to warm himself at the fire in his favorite attitude. "I didn't intend to tell you that."

"Tell me what?"

"That we had caught Michael Gilroy, or Gore, or whatever he chooses to call himself."

"Have you caught him? Well, I'm hanged!"

"I hope he won't be," said Durham, grimly. "I did not catch him myself. He came one night last week to the Bower to see Miss Malleson."

Conniston jumped up with an exclamation. "That is playing a daring game," he said. "Why, the fellow must know that she would spot him."

Durham pinched his chin and eyed Conniston. "I can't understand what his game is myself," he said slowly. "Of course, so far as looks go, the fellow is the double of Bernard without the distinguishing mark of the mole."

"You have seen him then?"

"Yes. A day or two ago. I asked Miss Plantagenet to pretend that she and Miss Malleson believed him to be Bernard. They have done so with such success that the boy—he is no more, being younger than Bernard—is lying in bed in the turret-room quite under the impression that he has bamboozled the lot of us. Of

course," added Durham, looking down, "he may be trusting to his illness to still further increase the likeness to Bernard, which, I may say, is sufficiently startling, and to supply any little differences."

"That's all jolly fine," said Dick, getting astride of a chair in his excitement, "but Bernard and Alice, being lovers, must have many things in common about which this man can't know anything."

"Quite so. And Miss Malleson knew he wasn't Bernard, seeing that the real man is at your castle. But even without that knowledge I don't think she would long have been deceived. Michael, putting aside his marvellous resemblance, is a common sort of man and not at all well educated. If you can image Bernard as one of the common people, without education and polish, you have Michael."

"What a nerve that Michael must have. How does he carry it off?"

Durham shrugged his shoulders. "The poor chap is not in a condition to carry off anything," he said; "he's lying pretty well worn out in bed, and Payne says it will be a long time before he is himself. I think he is simply pleased to know he has been accepted as Bernard, and is glad to postpone an explanation in case he'll be turned out."

"There's no danger of that," said Dick. "My aunt wouldn't turn out a cat in that state, much less a human being."

"Oh, Miss Berengaria seems to have taken quite a fancy to the man. She declares there's pluck in him, and——"

"But seeing he is a criminal—a murderer——"

"We don't know that he is, Conniston, and this——"

Durham laid his hand on the diary—" goes to prove his innocence."

" Bosh! " said Dick, jumping up. " I believe Mrs. Gilroy prepared that diary and left it out so that Miss Randolph would drop across it. If anyone killed Sir Simon it was Michael."

" Or Beryl."

" He was at the theatre."

" I know, but he managed to get the deed done by someone else. I really can't give an opinion yet, Conniston," said Durham resuming his seat, with a shrug; " to-morrow, when I see this Italian, I may learn something likely to throw light on the case. Meantime go back and tell Bernard I am working hard."

" That goes without the speaking," said his lordship, lightly; " we know what a worker you are, Mark. But Bernard wishes to take a hand in the game."

" Then he shall not do so," said Durham, sharply. " If he appears at this juncture all will be lost. I have a plan," he added, hesitating.

" What is it? " demanded the curious Conniston.

" Never you mind just now. It has to do with Mrs. Gilroy being drawn from her hiding-place. I'll tell you what it is after I have seen Tolomeo. But the success of my plan depends upon Bernard keeping in the background. If you tell him about Michael——"

" He'll be over like a shot. And after all, Mark, it's not pleasant to think a fellow is masquerading as you with the girl you love."

" Bernard must put up with that," snapped Durham, who was getting cross. " His neck depends upon my management of this affair. Should he go to Hurseton he *will be recognized* by everyone, let alone Jerry, who

would at once tell Beryl. You know what that means."

"I know that Beryl is playing for a big stake he won't land," said Conniston, grimly, and walked towards the door. "All right, Mark, I'll sit on Bernard and keep him quiet. But, I say, I want to tell you I am in love with——"

"Conniston, I will certainly throw something at your head if you don't clear. I have enough to do without listening to your love——"

"Not mine. She is—well there, I daresay your nerves are thin. I do wish all this business was ended. You used to be no end of a chap, and now you are as cross as a battery mule and twice as obstinate."

Lord Conniston talked himself out of the office, and went down to Cove Castle by a later train. Here he managed to pacify the impatient Bernard, no easy task. But the lessons of that week taught Dick patience, a quality he had always sadly lacked.

True to the appointment made by letter, Signor Tolomeo appeared at Durham's office and was at once shown in. He was a tall man with a keen, clever, dark face. His hair and mustache were gray and he had a military appearance. In his bearing there was great dignity, and it could be seen at a glance that he had good blood in his veins. It was true what Sir Simon had said. The Tolomeo family had been nobles of the Sieneese Republic for many a century, and although their present-day representative was poor in pocket and played the violin for a living, yet he looked a great lord. But his dark eyes had a somewhat reckless expression in them, which showed that Tolomeo lacked what is called *moral principle*.

Durham received him politely and indicated a seat

near his desk with a smile. Tolomeo, with great courtesy, bowed and sat down. Then he fixed his large eyes on the lawyer with an inquiring air, but was too astute to say anything. He had been brought here on an errand, the purport of which he knew nothing; therefore he waited to hear what Durham had to say before he committed himself.

"Signor Tolomeo," said the lawyer, "you were surprised to see my advertisement?"

"I was indeed," replied the Italian, who spoke excellent English. "Our last interview was not particularly pleasant."

"This may be still less so," rejoined Durham, dryly; "but as it concerns your nephew Bernard, perhaps you will be frank with me."

"Ah, poor Bernard!" said the uncle. "He is dead."

"No. He is alive."

"*Gran Dio!*" Tolomeo started from his seat in a somewhat theatrical manner. "What is this you say, signor?"

"I say that he is alive, but in hiding. I tell you this because I know you like Bernard and appreciate his kindness to you."

"Yes! The boy is a good boy. He has been very kind to me. Although," added Tolomeo, with a somewhat cynical air, "I do not deserve it. Ah, signor, the want of money makes us all sad rascals."

"That depends upon ourselves," said Durham, somewhat stiffly. "No man need be a rascal unless he likes."

"Money can make a good man or a bad one," insisted the Italian.

"I don't agree with you. But this is not what I wish to talk about, Signor Tolomeo. You are pleased that *Bernard is alive.*"

“Very pleased. But I trust he will escape.”

“Ah! Then you believe he is guilty of the crime.”

“He—or the other one.”

“What other one?” asked Durham, sharply.

Tolomeo looked directly at the lawyer. “Before I speak out,” he said, “it will set my mind at rest to know what you mean.”

“Does that hint you want money?”

“Money is always a good thing, and I need it badly,” said Guiseppe shrugging, “but, as this regards my own nephew, I am willing to aid him without money. I loved my sister, his mother, and she was badly treated by that old man!” Tolomeo’s eyes flashed. “He insulted her, and we—the Tolomeo nobles—were great lords in Siena when your England was wild forest and savage peoples.”

“Did you tell Sir Simon this when you saw him on that night?”

The Italian started up in some alarm. “What? You say I was with this English miser when he died?”

“No, I don’t say that. But I say you were at the house on that very night, and about the time the murder was committed. For all I know, signor, you may be able to say who killed him.”

Guiseppe, twisting his hat in his hands, looked keenly at Durham with his dark eyes. “Signor, be explicit,” he said.

“I’ll explain myself thoroughly,” said Durham. “You can sit down again, signor. Bernard,” he continued, when the Italian obeyed this request, “inherits his grandfather’s property, and, of course the title. He wants to help you, and proposes to give you five hundred a year as soon as possible.”

"Ah! That is good of him," said Tolomeo, gratefully.

"But," went on Durham, with emphasis, "Bernard cannot give you this income until he is formally put in possession of the estate; and he cannot take possession of the estate until he is cleared from this charge of murder. Now you can help me to clear him."

"Signor," said the Italian at once, "I thought Bernard was dead; that, as the papers said, he had been drowned crossing the river. But now that I know he is alive, you can command my services without money. All the same," added Tolomeo, smiling and showing his white teeth, "a little five hundred a year will make me a great lord in Siena, to which town I shall return."

"After helping Bernard?" warned Durham.

"Of course. I will not leave the country till Bernard is seated in his proper place, and married—I understand he is to be married."

"I believe so. But he must first be able to face his fellow-men in safety," said the lawyer, quickly. "Now, signor, you admit that you were at the house in Crimea Square on that night."

"Yes, why not? I went to see Sir Simon. I walked to the Hall in Essex to see him. He had gone to town; I found out where, and I came back to see him. On that night I went some time before ten o'clock."

"I know that," said Durham. "Mrs. Gilroy admitted you. She says she took you up to Sir Simon, and that you quarrelled with him."

"It is true, we had words."

"And then you left the house without seeing her. Behind you, according to Mrs. Gilroy, you left the dead body of Sir Simon."

Tolomeo started up as though about to run away, but immediately afterwards sat down. "I don't suppose you have called me here to make an arrest, signor," he said. "I am innocent, but I admit that I thought there might be trouble should it be known I was in that house on the night. I therefore kept silent. But now I know that my nephew is alive and accused of the crime, I will speak out. It was Mrs. Gilroy who admitted me, but it was not Mrs. Gilroy who let me out. I left Sir Simon perfectly well when we parted, and he promised to help me the next day."

"Oh! And the next day you heard of his death?"

"No, I heard of his death on that night. I was hanging about the house when Bernard escaped. I picked up—but I will tell you that later, signor, listen to my tale—it is strange but true. Set down what I say, for this I am prepared to swear to in a court of law. I should have seen you before and spoken had I known that Bernard was alive, but thinking he was dead I did not talk as I fancied there might be danger to me."

"There is danger if what Mrs. Gilroy declares is true."

"Confront her with me. What does she say?"

"I do not know where she is," confessed Durham, and related how the diary had been found, and explained the contents so far as they bore on the accusation of Tolomeo. He listened attentively.

"Oh, what a wicked woman!" he said vehemently when Durham ended. "I do assure you, signor, that I am innocent. Listen! I called to see Sir Simon before ten on that night. I sent up my name. The woman you speak of brought back a message that her master would see me."

"One moment," put in Durham. "Did you see a red light in the window?"

"Yes. There was a lamp near the window although the room was lighted with electric lamps. A red handkerchief was stretched across the window. But I know of the Red Window at the Hall," said the Italian, with a shrug. "My sister used to signal to me. I guessed that Sir Simon was making a signal to Bernard."

"Are you sure of that?"

"He told me so himself," said Tolomeo, quietly, "and it was because he thought I might know where Bernard was that he saw me. He said he would forgive Bernard and help me. We had some words, as he called me—a Tolomeo—names which I could not hear quietly. But afterwards he said he would help me, and then he wanted to see Bernard. Miss Randolph told him of the use she had made of the Red Window, so in this London house he did the same thing, hoping that Bernard might see the light and enter. If Bernard had," said the Italian, with great earnestness, "all would have been well."

"Do you know if Sir Simon sent a boy to bring Bernard?"

"No. I do not know. Sir Simon said nothing of that. He only put the lamp behind the handkerchief in the hope that Bernard might come to the house. For all he knew Bernard might have learned where he was staying. I think the old man was sorry he quarrelled with my poor nephew," said Tolomeo, with earnestness.

"Well, after arranging this you left Sir Simon?"

"Not immediately. Mrs. Gilroy came in and said that someone wanted to see Sir Simon. He heard her whisper to him, and said I could go away, telling Mrs.

Gilroy to send up the stranger. She went away. I followed, and opened the door myself."

"The front door?"

"Yes. But when I was going out I heard Sir Simon call over the stairs. He asked me to return. I closed the door and did so."

"Ah!" said Durham, making a note. "Mrs. Gilroy thought you had left the house. She said so in her diary. The she came upstairs?"

"No," said Tolomeo, "she did not. I went back to the room. Sir Simon said he wanted me to be present, as he had a disagreeable interview. He made me hide behind a curtain. I did so. Then the door opened and Bernard entered."

"What!" Durham started from his seat. "That's impossible."

"Of course it is," rejoined the Italian, smiling; "but I assure you, signor, the man who entered I took to be Bernard. He was——"

"Michael, the son of Mrs. Gilroy. I know that."

"Ah! And how?" asked Tolomeo, surprised and rather vexed. "I hoped to astonish you by this."

"Well, it's a long story. I'll tell it after you tell me yours. Michael entered dressed as a soldier."

"Yes," said Tolomeo, more and more surprised by the extent of the lawyer's knowledge. "I thought he was my nephew until I heard his conversation. Then I knew that this was Mrs. Gilroy's son and that she had been deceived by Walter Gore in a false marriage. Sir Simon told Michael that he was tired of assisting him, and accused him of making love to the housemaid. The boy—he is but a boy, signor—acknowledged this. Then Sir Simon said that Michael had forged his name for one thousand pounds."

Durham started up again. "What! Ah!" he said. "So that was a forgery, and I thought Sir Simon gave him the check. It was honored."

"Yes. Sir Simon said he knew it was a forgery, for the bank sent the check to him. But he said nothing about it so as to spare this Michael. But he said also that if Michael did not leave the country he would prosecute him. Michael retorted and there was a quarrel. I thought he would have struck the old man, so I came out. When Michael saw me he grew pale and, opening the door, ran downstairs and out into the fog. I followed to bring him back, as Sir Simon said, 'Follow him.'"

"Why did Michael run away?"

"I do not know. But he did. I went into the fog and followed him to the High Street. Then I lost him. As I turned out of the square I brushed past a man. It was under a lamp-post and I saw his face. He was in evening dress and was walking quickly. He entered the house by the door I had left open."

"And who was that?" asked Durham, curiously.

"Julius Beryl."

"Impossible! He was at the theatre."

"He was; but he came back," said Tolomeo, putting his hand in his pocket. "Listen. I ran up to the High Street, but could see nothing of Michael. I walked about for long. Then I came back before eleven. I found the door open, I saw Bernard in the hall, and heard that he was accused. I thought he was Michael returned. He escaped. I was by the railings on the opposite side of the street. As he ran he dropped a handkerchief. See!" Tolomeo produced it. "It is marked 'J. B.'"

Durham snatched the handkerchief. A faint smell of chloroform lingered about it still. Beryl's initials were in the corner. Durham looked up very pale.

"Yes," said Tolomeo, "that man killed Sir Simon."

CHAPTER XIX

PLOTS AND COUNTERPLOTS

On hearing from Tolomeo that Beryl was the guilty person, Durham was not so surprised as he might have been. He had always suspected that Julius was in some way connected with the crime, although he had not thought him personally guilty. But the story of Guiseppe, and the production of the handkerchief marked with Beryl's name seemed to put the matter beyond doubt. Durham remembered how Conniston had always said that when the lost handkerchief was found the assassin would be identified. Apparently his prophecy had come true. Here was the handkerchief, so fortunately picked up by Tolomeo, and it belonged to Julius. Also Julius, according to the Italian, had entered the house in Crimea Square about the time the murder was supposed to have been committed.

“And there's no doubt that Beryl sent Jerry for Bernard, so that he might be brought to the spot for accusation,” thought the lawyer when Tolomeo had gone. “The whole thing was a plant. I expect he arranged to go to the Curtain Theatre so as to have an *alibi*. But the theatre is near Crimea Square and it would be easy for Beryl to slip round between the acts. Humph! Evidently he did kill the old man—this handkerchief is proof enough, to say nothing of Tolomeo's evidence. What's to be done next?”

The question was answered next day while Durham

was still puzzling over the matter. Julius himself made his appearance, as meek-looking and mild as ever. The lawyer received him coldly and was on his guard. It was difficult to know why Beryl should pay a visit to an avowed enemy. But Julius soon explained the reason for his call.

"I have something extremely private to say to you, Mr. Durham," he remarked in a confidential way, and after assuring himself ostentatiously that the door was closed.

"I am not your legal adviser," said Durham, quickly.

"You are Bernard's."

"I *was* Bernard's, you mean."

"Does that intimate that you have quarrelled with Bernard?"

"You forget," said the solicitor, looking at him sharply. "Bernard is supposed to be dead."

"I don't think you ever believed that," said Beryl, smiling.

"That has nothing to do with you."

"Oh yes, it has. See here, Durham, I wrote to Miss Malleson some time ago, stating that I had seen Bernard in London."

"So I understand," said Durham, calmly. "Why did you not stop him?"

"I was not quick enough. He walked on the other side of the street, and before I could cross over, which was difficult on account of the traffic, Bernard disappeared. Then I was not quite sure if he really was alive. Now I am."

"Indeed?" said Durham, with a qualm, for he fancied Julius might have learned of Gore's whereabouts.

“ Yes! That young Moon wrote a letter to me saying that Bernard had come to the Bower, starving and in rags.”

It was on the tip of Durham’s tongue to say that no doubt Jerry had been placed as a spy at the Bower, but he suppressed this remark. He firmly believed that Julius was a murderer, but as yet he saw some difficulty in bringing the crime home to him. He thought it would be best to give the man rope enough to hang himself. In other words, to listen quietly to what he had to say and act accordingly. Durham did not like having anything to do with such a scoundrel, but in the interests of Gore he had to smother all feelings save strictly professional ones. He therefore confined himself to silence, and to looking inquiringly at Beryl.

“ You don’t seem surprised,” said Julius, annoyed.

“ Because I can hardly believe your statement. Jerry may be making a mistake.”

“ Oh no. I went down on the receipt of his letter, and insisted on seeing my cousin. Miss Plantagenet—as I knew she would,—denied that he was there; but afterwards, when I threatened to bring the police on to the scene, she gave way and let me see Bernard.”

“ You are sure, then, that Bernard committed the crime?”

“ Wait one moment, Mr. Durham,” said Beryl, wagging his finger in a most irritating way. “ Let us understand one another clearly. You know, and you have known for some time, that Bernard was at the Bower?”

“ I am not bound to answer that question,” said the lawyer, stiffly.

“ Bernard answered it for you. He told me you had *been to see him*, and that in spite of the change in his *looks you knew who he was.*”

Durham drew figures on his blotting-paper. He wondered if Julius really believed the man at the Bower to be Bernard Gore, or if he was trying to learn what he—Durham—thought himself. After some reflection the lawyer resolved to accept Michael as the man in question. Julius could not possibly know that the real Bernard was alive, and therefore it would be as wise to keep the knowledge from him until such time as light would come to show Durham how to move. "Yes," he said at length, throwing down his pen and taking up a position on the hearth-rug. "I was informed by Miss Plantagenet that Bernard had sought refuge with her, and I went down to see him."

"Why did you not tell me?" asked Julius, sharply.

Durham shrugged his shoulders. "By your own showing, seeing you wished to call in the police, you are not a friend to Bernard," he said. "Why should I have summoned you? To assist you to arrest him?"

"I do not wish him to be arrested," said Julius, mildly. "On the contrary, I wish the poor fellow to die in peace."

"To die—what do you mean?"

"What I say, Mr. Durham. Payne tells me that Bernard has been so exhausted by his wandering when in hiding, that he cannot recover. His death is only a question of days. Mind you"—Julius wagged his finger again—"I really believe he killed Sir Simon, but as he is dying, why, I shall do nothing. I am not a vindictive man. Besides," added Julius, looking sideways at the lawyer, "Bernard and I are friends now. I am also friendly with Miss Malleon."

"Indeed! And how did you bring that about?"

"By acting straightforward and honorably, as I

always do," said the meek Julius. "Miss Malleçon acknowledged to me that Bernard was sadly changed by the hardships he had undergone. All the same she recognized him. Unfortunately, the poor fellow is too feeble to tell her of the perils he underwent, so she has not had an opportunity of talking much to him."

It struck Durham from this speech that Julius was doubtful of the identity of Bernard with the man at the Bower. Else why should he make this remark about Alice not having had time to question the sick man, seeing that Alice alone could prove if he were Bernard or not? Durham was perplexed, and wondered what Julius was driving at, and how much he knew. A clue came with the next words.

"And being friends with Bernard," went on Beryl, "he is sorry that we quarrelled. Feeling that he is not long for this world he wants to make his will in my favor."

Durham nearly uttered an exclamation, for all of a sudden the whole rascally business became clear. Julius knew that the man at the Bower was Michael, and he was prepared to extract from him a forged will, in the hope that the real Bernard was dead. Having made use of Michael to bring about the accusation of Gore, he now used him to the very last to get the money. However, Durham kept his temper under, and pretended to believe that Julius was speaking in all good faith. He simply bowed his head. Every word that Julius said was weaving a rope for his own neck.

"Are you surprised then at my calling?" said Julius, anxiously.

"No," said Durham, returning to his seat. "If Gore wishes to make a will, I suppose I am the man to draw it up. I must go down and receive his instructions."

"I have them with me," said Julius, bringing out a sealed letter.

Durham, inwardly boiling at this rascality, but outwardly calm, opened the letter, while Julius kept a sharp look-out on him. He found a long letter, written in the same style as Bernard Gore usually wrote, setting forth directions for the will. These included an income of five hundred a year to Alice Malleeson, and the extra allowance of four hundred to Mrs. Gilroy, making her income five hundred in all. The rest of the estate, real and personal, went to Julius Beryl. Durham smiled inwardly as he read this document. It was exactly the kind of will Julius wanted. Michael was simply his instrument, and Durham shrewdly suspected that from some knowledge of the forged check Beryl had obtained this extraordinary influence.

"Well, it seems clear enough," said the lawyer, laying down the letter, "but I think Miss Malleeson, seeing what she loses, should have more."

"I think she has quite enough," said Julius, tartly.

"Then Mrs. Gilroy," said Durham, pretending ignorance. "Why should Bernard leave her this extra money?"

"I can't say. Bernard will probably tell you himself. Will you please draw out the will, Mr. Durham, and bring it down to the Bower for Gore to sign?"

For the sake of appearances Durham went on making objections. All these were met by Julius with infernal cleverness, until the lawyer—on the face of it—had not a leg to stand on, as the saying goes. Finally he consented to draw up the will as instructed by the letter, and agreed to meet Julius next day at Liverpool Street Station to go down with him to the Hall. Julius drew

a long breath of relief when the lawyer so agreed, and apparently had no idea that he was being tricked all the time.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Durham," said he, holding out his hand, "and when I come into possession of the estate you will find me a good client."

Durham, for the sake of keeping up the deception, had to shake hands, although he loathed himself for doing so. When the door closed on the arch plotter the solicitor went at once to wash his hands.

"What a complete scoundrel!" said Durham to himself. "And how confoundedly clever. Of course, if the real Bernard were dead this will might stand. At all events, even if Miss Malleson could prove that Michael is not her lover, the new will might lead to litigation. However, as Bernard is alive and well we can produce him at the eleventh hour to frighten Beryl. I am afraid that young man will be hanged after all, though I am unwilling, for the sake of the family, that things should come to that pass."

However, Durham, true to his appointment, arrived at the station the next day and had the will in his pocket. Julius read it in the train going down and expressed his approval of it. It was now Durham's cue to behave politely to Julius, and as though he truly believed in him and in the false Bernard Gore. But on the previous night he had written a long letter to Miss Berengaria, which was to be read to Alice. In it Durham told the whole of Beryl's scheme to get possession of the property. But for obvious reasons he said nothing of Tolomeo's story or Beryl's real guilt. He thought, very truly, that even Miss Berengaria's nerves could not stand being brought into such close relation-

ship with a proven murderer, let alone that Alice might reveal the truth out of sheer disgust. But the letter prepared the minds of both ladies for the execution of the will.

On arriving at the Bower the two men were met by Jerry, looking more innocent and child-like than ever. "Please, missus says will you go into the drawing-room?" said the infant, casting down his eyes.

Durham looked hard at the young scoundrel who was such a worthy instrument of Beryl's. He would have liked to examine him then and there touching his luring of Bernard to Crimea Square, but the present moment was not propitious, so he passed on. Julius, however, in a most benevolent way spoke to the boy—"I hope you are giving your good mistress satisfaction?"

"Oh yes, sir. But she was angry at me writing and telling you about the poor sick gentleman."

"By the way, Jerry, how did you find out about him?" asked Durham.

"I saw him arrive," said Jerry, ingenuously. "I was in the garden when he came. I wouldn't have written, sir, if I had known that my dear missus wanted it kept dark. But Mr. Beryl was so anxious about Sir Bernard that I thought he would be glad to know he was alive."

"How did you know this gentleman was Sir Bernard?"

"I heard James the coachman describe him, and then I knew."

"All the same, Jerry," said Julius, benevolently, "if Miss Berengaria wished the fact of Sir Bernard's being here kept quiet, you should not have disclosed it even to me."

"But I wished to set your mind at rest," murmured Jerry, looking up with dove-like eyes. "I owe you so much, sir."

Julius smiled and patting his head, walked on to the drawing-room. It was a very pretty comedy, but Durham was not to be taken in. He knew well enough that the boy was a mere tool and a dangerous one. As a matter of fact, he did not know until later how dangerous the lad really could be.

Miss Berengaria and Alice were in the drawing-room, and both smiled a welcome when the two men entered. Alice darted a look of terror and repulsion at Beryl, but as he was shaking hands with the old lady he did not see it, else he might have suspected. Durham guessed this and touched her hand. She nodded, and when Julius shook hands with her she welcomed him again with a smile, although her very flesh crept when she touched him. As for Miss Berengaria, that indomitable old lady never turned a hair. She smiled and chatted, and was bland to Julius. He might have been her dearest friend from the amount of attention she bestowed on him.

"So poor Bernard is going to make his will," she said briskly. "I hope he has left Alice something."

"Five hundred a year, and the like amount to Mrs. Gilroy."

"Indeed, Mr. Durham; and why to Mrs. Gilroy?"

"Bernard looks upon her as a second mother," said Julius, hastily; "at least he told me so. Of course, I know nothing about her. I hope, however, she will reappear to claim her legacy."

"There may be no chance for anyone to claim legacies for a long time," said Miss Berengaria, tartly. "I hope Bernard will not die."

"I hope so also," said Alice, fervently; and she really meant it, even though she was thinking of the young scamp upstairs.

Julius shook his head. "Dr. Payne assures me he cannot live. I am glad he has decided to make this will."

"Yes, you would be," said Miss Berengaria ironically, and she might have been rash enough to say more, but that Durham intervened.

"I hope none of the servants know that Bernard is here?"

"They all know by this time," said Miss Berengaria, calmly. "We kept the matter from them as long as possible; and with Alice I waited on Bernard myself. But Jerry told the servants as well as Mr. Beryl."

"Will the knowledge go any further?" said the lawyer, keeping up the comedy. "I don't want Bernard arrested."

"My servants will not speak under pain of dismissal, if that is what you mean," said Miss Plantagenet, sharply. "As to Jerry——"

"He is one of your servants also," said Beryl, softly; "but I have some influence over Jerry, and I will see that he holds his tongue."

"You can take him away altogether," snapped Miss Berengaria. "I don't approve of having boys with long tongues in my house. Jerry had no right to be hanging round the garden when Bernard arrived, much less to write and tell you that he was here."

"He thought I was anxious."

"I daresay you are," said the old dame, "to see Bernard hanged."

"Indeed, no," replied Julius, earnestly. "I wish *him* to die in peace."

"Having got all you can out of him," muttered Miss Berengaria, rubbing her nose. "Well," she added sharply, "are we to go upstairs and witness this will?"

"Yes! Mr. Beryl can't witness as he is the residuary legatee. Nor can Miss Alice, since she is mentioned in the will. But you, Miss Plantagenet, and——"

"And yourself?"

"No. I am the executor."

"Then Maria can witness the will. She is my own maid and can be depended upon. Are you coming, Julius?"

"Thank you, no," said Beryl, with a gentle smile. "I think as I have such a large interest in the will that it is better I should remain away. I shall stay here. And you, Miss Malleson?"

"I shall stop also," said Alice in reply to a look from Durham. "You go up with Mr. Durham, aunt."

"Come along then," said Miss Berengaria, hastening out of the room; "the sooner this is over the better. Ugh! I hate wills. They put me in mind of the family vault, and I can't last long now."

The lawyer followed, and Miss Berengaria led him up a narrow stair which conducted to the turret-room in which the false Bernard was lying. At the foot of this stair she stopped. "Durham," she said abruptly, "do you mean to let this man execute this false will?"

"Yes. I wish Julius Beryl to commit himself beyond recall."

"What will you do then?"

"I can't say. One thing at a time. When the will is executed we will watch Beryl's attitude. Something will happen," added Durham, thinking of the incriminating handkerchief in his possession.

"Yes," said Miss Berengaria, climbing the stairs with a briskness surprising in a woman of her years, "something will happen. This poor foresworn wretch upstairs will die."

"But I thought you said——"

"I know I did. I could help him back to life with careful nursing, and I wish to do so, since I think there is good in the rascal. But Beryl, having had the will made, will—kill him. Yes," added she, nodding, "there will be a repetition of the crime. I believe Beryl himself killed Simon—the old—no, he is dead. Let us be just."

"What makes you think Julius Beryl killed Sir Simon?"

"Nothing," snapped Miss Berengaria; "he looks like a murderer." Durham smiled to himself as he went up the stairs and wondered at her acuteness in thus hitting the nail on the head. When the will was executed Julius certainly might attempt to get rid of the instrument he had used, as he had rid himself of Sir Simon, but in the house of Miss Berengaria this would be a more difficult matter. "And if he tries anything of that sort on," thought Durham, "I'll have him arrested at once for the first murder. Meantime, let us see how far he will proceed with the plot."

The young man lying in bed was very weak. His face was thin and pale and his scrubby beard was now longer. He looked haggard and anxious, and started up when the door opened. "It is only Mr. Durham and I, Bernard," said Miss Berengaria in a soft voice. "We have come about the will."

Michael raised himself on his elbow. "Have you got it?" he asked.

"Yes," said Durham, producing the document. "Miss Plantagenet, will you please call up your maid to witness it?"

While the old lady rang the bell and Michael read the will, the lawyer looked closely at the invalid. He was wonderfully like Bernard, and but that Durham knew that the real Gore was in another place he might have been deceived. Michael was clever enough to feign illness as an excuse for talking little, as he evidently intended to say much lest Alice or Durham should question his identity. The whole deception was cleverly carried out. Michael even attempted to account for any difference in his signature.

"I feel so weak I can't write as firmly as I used to," he said, when the maid entered the room. "So you must not be surprised if my signature is unlike my usual one."

"If it is as good as the writing in your letter, I shan't complain," said Durham, wheeling a small table near to the bed.

Michael looked at him sharply, and seemed relieved by this remark. He evidently thought that all was well and safe, and heard Durham read the will with closed eyes. Then, raising himself on his elbow, he signed his name with apparent difficulty. It was wonderfully like the signature of Bernard. Miss Plantagenet and Maria appended their signatures as witnesses. Then Durham put the will into an envelope and prepared to go down. Michael stopped him.

"Mark," he said, using the name Bernard usually called the lawyer by, "don't you think I am looking better?"

"I think you are very ill," said Durham, gently.

"But you don't think I'll die?"

"I hope not. With nursing you may get better."

Michael's face assumed an expression of terror. "I won't die," he moaned, sinking back. "I want to get well and enjoy myself."

"Hush! hush!" said Miss Berengaria, folding the clothes round him, "no more of this unhealthy talk. You will get well."

With Durham they left the room while Maria remained to attend on the patient. "Well," said Durham, in a low voice, "you see he expects to get well, now that he has signed the will. I daresay he will disappear. The body of Bernard will be found, and Michael will share the estate with Beryl."

"I don't think so," said Miss Plantagenet, grimly. "Beryl will now murder this poor reptile, and take all the money to himself."

"I fear his expectations will be disappointed," said the lawyer, dryly.

CHAPTER XX

A CONFESSION

At the request of Miss Berengaria, Durham stopped to dinner; but not even the necessity of keeping Julius in a fool's paradise could make the old lady extend the invitation to him. Beryl did not mind. He knew perfectly well that he was no favorite with Miss Plantagenet, and often wondered why she was so polite to him. A scoundrel himself, Julius was always suspicious of others, and constantly strove to learn why Miss Berengaria, whose honest character he knew, displayed such courtesy towards him. Then he thought it was because Bernard being in her house she was afraid lest he should be arrested through the instrumentality of his cousin should not tact be shown. Julius departed quite satisfied in his own mind that he had solved the problem of Miss Plantagenet's behavior. Had he known the real reason he would not have gone away so complacently.

Before departing, Julius saw Jerry and told him—amongst other things—that he would have to leave Miss Plantagenet because of his having meddled with matters which did not concern him. During the interview Miss Berengaria came along and the matter was explained to her. She refused to allow Beryl to interfere.

“Mind your own precious business, young man,” she said. “I am quite able to look after the boy myself.”

“But he *has* behaved badly,” urged Julius, meekly.

“So he has, and I’d give him a good whipping. However, I am not going to dismiss him for this. Jerry, go to the kitchen and mind your P’s and Q’s, or I’ll know the reason why. And now, Mr. Beryl”—the old lady dropped a grim curtsy—“good-bye.”

Julius departed smiling and in no wise offended at the grimness of Miss Berengaria. “I’ll soon be able to do without the lot of them,” he thought, as he walked to the railway station, “once the estate is in my possession, and I’ll keep away from this place. Lucy will have to turn out of the Hall, as I won’t have her stopping, after the way in which she has treated me. I believe she is in love with that bouncer of a Conniston. However,” he added enigmatically, “I know my own knowing.”

He did not know Durham’s, however, and would have been considerably agitated had he learned what that gentleman said to the two ladies after his departure. Not only to them but to Lord Conniston himself. That young gentleman arrived with Lucy shortly before dinner. Lucy had come over to the meal, and Conniston, on his way back to Bernard at the castle, thought he would drop in. Of course, as the astute lover intended, he was asked to dinner.

The meal passed off excellently, as everyone was in good spirits. The lawyer had hinted that Bernard would soon be free, and promised to tell the company all that he had discovered after dinner. When the meal was ended they all went back to the drawing-room and sat round the solicitor, who commenced his recital. Prior to starting, Miss Berengaria went up to see *Michael*, and returned stating that he was much better. “I believe he will get well,” she said.

"Of course," observed the lawyer, ironically, "the comedy is nearly at an end. The will has been signed. Now Michael will disappear to allow Beryl to get the estates."

"He will have to supply a corpse then," said Conniston, coolly.

"Oh, I daresay he will," rejoined Durham, shrugging. "After the disappearance of Michael I know exactly what will happen. A body much decomposed will be found in the Thames, and will be recognized by Julius as that of Bernard's. Any corpse will do, so long as the face cannot be recognized."

"Drat the man!" said Miss Berengaria, emphatically. "You can't get a corpse without murdering someone, and I should think that Beryl creature has had enough of that sort of work."

"Oh, but Julius did not kill Sir Simon," said Lucy, with dismay. "He was at the theatre with me and Mrs. Webber."

"So I believe," said Durham, dryly; "but tell me, Miss Randolph, did he leave you at all during the play?"

"Not till the last act," said Lucy. "Then he went to get something to drink, and returned before the end of the play to take us away."

"How long was he absent?"

"Nearly half an hour. He said he had met a friend and had been talking to him."

"Ah! Very clever of him. Well," said Durham, looking round, "I have something to tell you all. We are friends of Bernard's, are we not?"

"Certainly," said Miss Berengaria, sharply, "and I know what you are going to tell us. This Beryl

creature murdered Sir Simon when he was away from the theatre."

"Impossible!" said Lucy and Alice in one breath.

"He could scarcely have done it in half an hour," said Conniston.

"But he did for all that," said Durham. "Remember, the Curtain Theatre is only ten minutes' walk from Crimea Square. Beryl could easily slip round and strangle Sir Simon—as he did."

"I knew it," cried Miss Berengaria, triumphantly. "Tell us all about it, Durham. Aha! we'll see that reptile dancing on nothing."

"Oh, aunt!" said Alice, turning pale.

"Miss Plantagenet," remonstrated Lucy, "don't speak like that. I do not like Julius, and broke my engagement. I think he is tricky, and has no principles, but I don't think he would——"

"Yes, he would," contradicted the old lady, taking a pinch of snuff. "Bah! don't talk to me. Liar and rogue, murderer and thief are written all over him. My dear girls, the man is a danger to society. I want to see him hanged. He would have hanged Bernard."

"That's true enough," said Conniston; "but for the sake of the family, I don't want to see Julius hanged. So long as he tells the truth and lets Bernard take his place in society I don't care."

"He won't let Bernard take his place in society," insisted Miss Berengaria, quietly. "I daresay I am vindictive, but that young reptile—ugh!" She shuddered and took another pinch of snuff.

"Are you sure he is guilty?" asked Lucy, timidly.

"Quite sure," said Durham, gravely. "I have evidence," and he produced a handkerchief.

“Tell us all about it, Durham,” said Miss Plantagenet, briskly. “The sooner we learn the truth the better. I am getting very tired of this connection with the Police Court. I have read detective novels,” added the old lady, emphatically, “and I never liked them. To have one in real life and under my respectable roof is more than I can bear. Durham, you have an hour before you need catch your train. Tell us all. Then you can clear out, and you, Conniston, can go also. Lucy, I shall send Jerry back to the Hall with you.”

“No, please not, Jerry,” said Lucy.

“He is a scamp,” replied Miss Berengaria, after a pause. “Well—well, we shall see. Meantime, freeze our blood, Durham.”

This the lawyer proceeded to amidst a dead silence. No one interrupted him until his recital was ended. To make things clear, he narrated his discoveries from the very beginning, and recounted his interview with Mrs. Gilroy, with Tolomeo and with Beryl. At the end of his story everyone looked at one another. Lucy shuddered and hid her face, overwhelmed by the discovery of the wickedness of the man she had been engaged to. Alice was quite pale, thinking of the nets in which Bernard had been caught, and which were now on the eve of being broken, that he might escape. Conniston said a word under his breath not exactly fitted for the drawing-room, but which was overheard by Miss Berengaria and approved by that lady.

“Thank you, Conniston,” she said, taking a pinch of snuff with relish. “Never tell me that I am not a judge of character. I knew that scamp was the murderer *ages ago*. I said so. Now”—she addressed Durham

with a suddenness which made him jump—"what's to be done?"

"I intend to have Beryl arrested."

"And then?"

"I shall make Bernard give himself up. The whole case must be tried in court. Also I shall have Michael arrested."

"But why, if he is innocent?"

"My dear Miss Plantagenet," said the lawyer, slowly, "Mrs. Gilroy is an important witness in this case. She is hiding. As soon as she sees that her son is arrested, and in danger of being condemned as an accessory before the fact, she will come out and give evidence to show that he acted merely as the tool of Beryl. In a word, she will save him."

"Which is four or five words. Well, Durham, I don't say but what you are right, and if—Good gracious, what's that?"

This was the sudden entrance of Maria, looking pale. She hurried up to her mistress and caught her arm. "Oh, ma'am, come to see that poor gentleman," she said. "He is very ill—I don't know what's the matter."

Neither Miss Berengaria nor the others were startled; it was to be expected that Michael would have frequent lapses in his illness.

The old lady rose at once to the occasion. "Send Jerry at once for Dr. Payne," she said sharply.

"Please, ma'am, Jerry has left the house."

"Left the house! What do you mean?"

Maria explained. "I haven't seen Jerry since six o'clock," she declared; "he brought me up the cup of tea you ordered for the poor sick gentleman."

"I ordered no tea," said Miss Berengaria, with uneasiness.

"Jerry said you did, ma'am," persisted the maid; "he brought it to me, and said you wished the gentleman to drink it at once. He waited while the gentleman did so, and then said he would tell you. I forgot to mention it, ma'am, when you came up after dinner."

Durham nodded significantly and rose. "I will go for Dr. Payne," he said, walking to the door. "Is the gentleman ill?"

"Very, sir. He says he has a burning pain in his stomach."

Durham nodded again and glanced at the old lady. "You were right," he said gravely, "there is something wrong," and he disappeared to fetch the doctor.

"Where is Jerry gone?" asked Miss Berengaria.

"I don't know, ma'am. James said he went out at half-past six with his bag, complaining you had sent him away."

"James should have stopped him, or have told me."

"So he says, ma'am, now."

"When it is too late," said the angry Miss Berengaria. "Alice, come with me. Conniston, you can wait here with Miss Randolph," and before the couple could say a word, the old lady hurried out of the room, followed by Alice. Both were oppressed by a sense of anxiety.

Michael was very ill and in great pain. Sitting up in bed, he was pressing both hands to his stomach and moaning. "Oh, give me water—water," he entreated, when the women appeared. "I am dying of thirst."

While Miss Berengaria gave him drink, Alice looked into the *tea-cup*, which still stood on the table beside

the bed. At the bottom there was a white sediment. "Something has been given to you in your tea," she said, turning pale.

"It was some time after drinking the tea that I felt ill," moaned Michael, rocking to and fro. "Oh, how I suffer."

"Jerry brought the tea," began Miss Plantagenet, when Michael interrupted her with a scream.

"Jerry! Jerry! It's Beryl's work. Jerry did anything he told him. I believe he has poisoned me. Call him up—call him up."

"Jerry has gone away," said Miss Berengaria, very pale.

"Lost! Lost!" moaned Michael. "Ah, this was why he made me sign the will—this was why—oh, heavens! how I suffer—suffer—the pain—the pain. Help me—help me! I am poisoned!"

Both the terrified women looked at one another, for even Miss Berengaria, strong-minded as she was, felt her nerve give way under this unexpected catastrophe. Then Alice advanced to the bedside, and from sheer force of habit addressed Michael by the false name he had assumed. "Bernard——"

"I am not Bernard," he screamed, rocking and rocking. I will confess all. I am a dead man. Beryl won't give me the money now. He wants it all to himself. He has made Jerry poison me. I am to die as Sir Simon died. I am lost—lost—lost. Oh, what a wicked man I have been."

"Make atonement while you can," said Miss Berengaria, taking swift advantage of the opportunity. "Listen. We have known for some time that you are not Bernard Gore, and——"

Michael paid no attention, but kept on rocking in an agony of pain. "Help me—save me!" he moaned. "Oh, great heavens!"

"Payne will be here directly," said the old lady. "Maria"—the maid was in the room by this time—"go down and bring up some boiling water. We will apply hot flannels to his stomach."

"Meanwhile," said Alice, when the maid ran out, "tell us about yourself, Michael."

"Michael—Michael," he muttered, with the perspiration beading his brow. "You know my name. I thought you took me for Gore."

"Never. Bernard Gore is alive. We pretended to believe you, so that in the end you might be induced to confess."

"And now you have poisoned me."

"Certainly not," cried Miss Plantagenet, quickly. "Jerry gave you the cup of tea."

"He said you told him to bring it up."

"I did not. He brought it up himself, and has now left the house. As soon as he knew you had drunk it, he left the house. And now that I remember," added Miss Berengaria, sharply, "Beryl was talking privately to the boy before he went away."

"Yes! Yes! It is Beryl who has done this. Oh, I will confess all. It was Beryl who killed Sir Simon."

"We know that, and—ah, here is Payne. Doctor, I am glad you have come. Do you know——"

"I know a great deal," said Payne. "Mr. Durham talked to me while we drove along. He met me half-way to Hurseton. Come, we must get to work."

He asked Alice and Durham, who had entered, to *leave the room*, and began to attend to the wretched

man. Maria came up with hot water and then hurried down for oil and mustard. Payne took up the cup which Miss Berengaria pointed out and examined it. He touched the sediment with the tip of his finger and tasted it. "Arsenic," said he.

"Good Lord!" cried the old lady, sitting down heavily, "and in my own house. Doctor, that boy must be arrested. Are you sure?"

"Certain. Arsenic has been administered. That is why he feels these burning pains. Give me the oil and mustard. We must give him an emetic, so that he may get rid of the poison. We may save him yet."

"You must save him!" cried Miss Berengaria, lending a hand readily, "for his evidence is needed to convict Beryl of murder."

"Mr. Durham told me something of this, but not all," said Payne, going on with the business. "Go down and leave the man to me for a time, Miss Berengaria. I will call you when he is better."

By this time Michael was almost insensible with pain, but Miss Plantagenet left the room at once. Hurrying down to the drawing-room, she found the four young people waiting there with scared faces. Even Durham was startled by the expedition with which Julius had carried out his plan of ridding himself of an undesirable witness.

"Though he's a fool," said the lawyer, emphatically. "He should have made Jerry wait for a few days."

"And to use such an obvious poison," said Miss Berengaria; "it is arsenic that has been administered."

"Michael will confess now, though," said Alice. "I do hope he won't die. Mr. Durham, where are you going?"

“To the Hurseton telegraph office. The doctor’s trap is at the door now. I wish to wire to Scotland Yard, so that Jerry may be caught.”

“Don’t go,” implored Alice, “at any time Michael may be able to speak, and I wish you to write down his confession.”

“I will go,” said Conniston, jumping up. “Write down the wire, Durham. The sooner Jerry is tracked he better. We shall catch Julius yet.”

“I only hope we’ll save Michael,” muttered Durham, going to Miss Plantagenet’s desk. “Come here, Conniston.”

“When the wire was written—and a long one it was—Conniston made free with Payne’s trap and drove to Hurseton, where he sent it at once to London. Meanwhile, those in the drawing-room talked over the matter and waited to hear from the doctor. After an hour he made his appearance. “He is better,” he announced; ‘the mustard and oil made him sick. I think he has got rid of the poison. He wants to see you, Mr. Durham.”

“I’ll go at once,” said the lawyer, while Alice clasped her hands.

But Payne stopped him. “No. I want the man to have a short sleep first,” he said, “and I am returning to watch beside him. I will ring the bell when he is better and able to speak.”

It was late that night or rather early next morning before the household retired. Miss Berengaria, thinking the servants had better know as little as possible, sent them to bed, retaining only Maria to wait on her personally. Then Conniston returned, and the five sat *in the drawing-room* talking. About two in the morn-

ing the bell in the turret chamber was heard to ring. Durham, with writing materials, hastened up at once. Alice wanted to go, but Miss Berengaria made her stop. Then she sent Conniston to the Hall to tell any servant who was waiting up that Miss Randolph would remain that night at the Bower. "And when you return, you can sleep also," she said.

Durham found Michael better but weak. He was lying back on his pillows in an almost exhausted condition, and Payne was feeling his pulse. "I wanted him to wait till the dawn," said the doctor, "but he insists on speaking."

"I might die," said Michael, his eyes large and bright and his voice hoarse. "I want my revenge on this man who tried to poison me."

"Are you sure Beryl——"

"I am quite sure. Jerry brought up the tea, and arsenic was in it. I know Beryl wanted to get all the estate to himself. Tell me"—Michael looked anxiously towards Durham—"is Gore alive?"

"Yes. Miss Malleon and Miss Plantagenet knew you were Michael Gilroy as soon as you came."

"And they fooled me."

"They did," admitted Durham, promptly, "and I did also. I allowed you to make that false will, so as to trap Beryl."

"Ah! and he will be trapped and hanged," said the boy, bitterly. "I only hope I'll be alive to see him swing."

"Mr. Durham," said Payne, removing his finger from the patient's pulse, "if you want to hear this confession you had better get to work at once. I cannot allow him to talk long."

"I'll begin," said Michael, in a stronger voice, and without further preamble he began to talk in a slow, monotonous voice, almost without a pause. Durham took down his words swiftly.

"My name is Michael Gilroy," said the lad, quietly. "I am the son of Walter Gore, the father of Bernard, and of Mrs. Gilroy, who was the housekeeper at the Hall. My father deceived her by a false marriage, as at the time, although my mother did not know, he was already married to a Signora Tolomeo."

"You are sure of that?" asked Durham. "Your mother said——"

"I know—I know, but she is wrong. She wanted to make me out the heir. But I am three years younger than my half-brother. It was a false marriage. When my mother discovered the truth, she went to America with me. My father allowed us an income. When he died, my mother was starving with me in New York. She came to this country and saw my grandfather, Sir Simon, in London. He heard her story and was sorry for her. Then he offered her the post of housekeeper at the Hall, and promised to provide for her after his death. But he would only assist her on condition that I was sent back to the States. I returned, and my mother kept me out of her wages. She has been a good mother to me——"

"Take this," said Payne, holding wine to his lips, for his voice was growing weaker.

Michael drank, and continued at once. "My mother had an idea of making me the heir. But, as I told her, that was impossible. She had told Sir Simon too much at first. I remained in the States till I was over twenty, then I came to England. Sir Simon got me a post in

the city. I did not like the work, and I idled. He often assisted me. I behaved very badly."

"I know that," said Durham, pausing in his writing. "You forged a check made payable to Bernard Gore."

Michael laughed weakly. "I did," he said. "I wanted money and I got a thousand pounds by that."

"How is it that you are so poor?"

"Because Beryl took the money from me. He wanted money also, and he threatened to have me arrested for the murder if I did not give him all. I spent very little of it. He took all, and then left me to starve. I came here, and——"

"Wait a bit; I want to know about your impersonation of Gore?"

"That was Beryl's idea also. He met me in the city, as Sir Simon one day sent him to pay me money. He was struck by my likeness to my half-brother, and even then he resolved to make use of me. But there was no chance until Bernard quarrelled with Sir Simon. Then Beryl found that Gore had enlisted in the Imperial Yeomanry. He told me that Sir Simon was coming to town to live in Crimea Square, and he was afraid lest he should become reconciled to Bernard. Beryl, knowing how proud Sir Simon was, persuaded me to impersonate Bernard by dressing up as an Imperial Yeoman, and arranged that I should make love to a housemaid——"

"So as to get into the house?"

"Yes; and so as to let the fact get to Sir Simon's ears. Beryl thought that if Sir Simon knew that Bernard was making love to a servant, he would cast him off for ever. Well, I did make the acquaintance of the housemaid and visited at the house, keeping well out of sight of my mother."

“She did not know you were there?”

“No. Whenever she was heard coming I got out of the way. She really thought from Jane’s description that I was my half-brother.”

“When did you forge the check?”

“Just before I met Jane at the beginning of October. Beryl and I both wanted the money. I could imitate Bernard’s writing, as Beryl got me some letters of his. I forged the check and got the money. Then Beryl afterwards took it from me.”

“And did Sir Simon know of the forgery?” said Durham, thinking of what had been said to him by Tolomeo.

“I am coming to that,” went on Michael, after another drink of wine. “I visited at the house as I said, and Sir Simon came to know that—as he thought—Bernard was about the place. He sent down on the evening of the committal of the crime to ask me up. I was afraid, and I ran away.”

“Why did you return before ten?”

“Ah, you know that, do you?” said Michael, with a weak smile. “I returned because it struck me that there might be some difficulty about the check, and I thought I would see Sir Simon about it myself. I fancied he might have me arrested. On the other hand, I thought he might truly think it was Bernard, and then that would assist Beryl’s plans for keeping him out of the property. I came to the house just after ten. My mother opened the door. When she saw me, she ordered me away. I refused to go.”

“Why was that?”

Michael hesitated for a moment. “I have not told you my real reason for coming,” he said at length. “It

was Beryl's plan. He arranged to go to the theatre, and that I should come to the house at that time. I saw him between six and eight. He told me that he would send Jerry to lure Bernard to the Crimea Square house——”

“How did he know where Bernard was?”

“He kept a watch on Bernard through Jerry. It was arranged that I should see Sir Simon and make things safe for myself about the check should there be any trouble. I thought that was Beryl's plan at the time,” said Michael, restlessly, “but now I see that he intended murder. I was to go as Bernard, and when I left, the old man was to be killed. Then Bernard, brought by Jerry, would be on the spot and would be arrested.”

“And that is exactly what happened.”

“I know. But I swear I did not know it at the time,” said Michael, earnestly. “I really believed all was safe. Had I guessed that Beryl intended murder, I should not have gone to see Sir Simon. But I did go. He knew about the check and threatened to have me arrested. There was an Italian hidden in the room. Sir Simon called him, and when I saw him I ran away.”

“Why did you do that?”

“I thought he was a detective, and that Sir Simon intended to arrest me at once. I ran away and went home. That is all I know.”

Durham was disappointed. “But you surely know who killed——”

“No,” interrupted Michael. “I suspected Beryl. I think he killed him, but I am not sure. Next day, when the murder was proclaimed, and it was said Bernard was drowned, Beryl came to me, and told me to

lie quiet in case I should be arrested for the crime. He then took all my money by threatening to have me arrested as the murderer."

"But if you had told this story, and used Tolomeo as a witness——"

"Tolomeo? who is he? I know no one of that name."

"He was the man you took for a detective."

"Well, then, not knowing who he really was, how could I have cleared myself? Beryl could have accused me."

"Tolomeo could have cleared you. He was with Sir Simon when you left, and Sir Simon was alive. What happened then?"

"I lay quiet. Then I grew afraid, and hid myself in different places. Beryl found me out, and persuaded me to come here to personate Bernard, and make a will. He promised me that I should get half the money. I intended to vanish when I made the will, and then Beryl arranged to get the money somehow——"

"But how did you expect to deceive Miss Malleeson?"

"I didn't. I intended to tell her the truth, as I was weary of Beryl's tricks. But when I saw that she and Miss Plantagenet took me for Bernard, I resolved to carry on the plot. Then Beryl came and the will was signed. You know the rest."

Michael's voice had been growing weaker and weaker. Finally his eyes closed, and he laid his head back on the pillow. "He has fainted again," said Payne. "You must wait till he recovers for the signature."

CHAPTER XXI

YOUNG JUDAS

The next morning Michael was pronounced to be out of danger by Dr. Payne, and appended his signature to the confession. He still held to his indignant attitude against Beryl, and was most anxious that he should be arrested. So far as he knew, Beryl was innocent of the crime; but Durham knew better. Having the evidence of Tolomeo and possession of the fatal handkerchief, he was perfectly content to believe that Julius was guilty. Since he was one of the Gore family, it was a grave question as to whether he should be arrested. But seeing that Bernard's character could not be cleared until the whole truth came out, and the wrongdoer suffered for his wickedness, it was agreed that a warrant should be obtained for the guilty person. This business was entrusted to Durham, and he departed for town by the mid-day train.

"And you can ride over to the castle, Conniston," he said to that young gentleman, who accompanied him to the station, "and tell Bernard to hold himself in readiness to come to London."

"Will he be arrested?"

"I fancy so. But I can't yet be sure. At all events, Beryl will be accused and taken in charge, so Bernard will soon be set free."

"What about Jerry?"

"I will go to Scotland Yard as soon as I arrive, and

see if anything has been heard of the young scamp. However, if we get Beryl, we may be able to do without Jerry."

"Do you intend to have Michael arrested?"

"Yes," said Durham, calmly, "as an accessory before the fact. I can't say if he is innocent or guilty."

"But, Durham, you heard him declare that he was unaware that Beryl intended to kill Sir Simon. Michael only called to see about the check."

"I doubt that part of his confession," replied the lawyer, dryly. "It appears to me that Michael would have kept out of the way had he entertained the slightest idea that Sir Simon—as he did—guessed that the check was forged. Besides, I want to have a mention of Michael Gilroy's arrest put in the papers, so that his mother may be withdrawn from her hiding-place."

"Do you think she will come?"

"I am certain. She alone knows what took place when Beryl entered the house and how he strangled the old man. I am convinced that to save her son she will denounce Julius, no matter what offer he has made to her about holding her tongue. Here's the train. Good-bye, Conniston, and bring Bernard up to town when I send a wire."

The train steamed off, and Conniston was left standing on the platform. "I do hope all this business will soon be at an end," he said to himself. "I am about weary of surprises."

Already it had been arranged that Miss Berengaria should keep an eye on Michael—who never expected to be arrested—so Conniston had no need to return to the Bower. Mounting his horse he took his way along the *high-road to the castle*, and arrived there somewhere

about two o'clock. As there was no one about the place he put up the horse himself, and then came to the front door. Much to his surprise it was locked, but a vigorous ringing of the bell brought Mrs. Moon to the door. That estimable lady looked worried, and her pallid face was whiter than ever, gleaming like the moon itself from the frilling of her cap. When she saw her master, she lifted up her large hands.

"Goodness be praised your lordship has come," said she, with a moan and groan combined in a most extraordinary way. "Have you seen my wicked Victoria, your lordship?"

"No. Has she gone away?"

"Last night," said Mrs. Moon, drifting into the hall. "Bless your lordship dear, she went away before ten o'clock in her best things, saying she would be back. And not an eye have I set on her since. But then I expect the coming of Jerry upset her."

"Jerry!" shouted Conniston, throwing down his cap. "Did you say that Jerry was here?"

"Yes. He's here, your lordship, and he has sent Mr. Grant mad. As soon as Jerry set eyes on Mr. Grant last night, when he come at nine o'clock, he had his hair standing on end. Mr. Grant, he was amazed-like also, and took Jerry to his room. There he have kept him locked up, and wished to send a messenger to your dear lordship, and——"

Conniston waited to hear no more. He tore up the stairs two at a time, and burst red-faced and excited into Bernard's sitting-room.

His friend had already heard his hasty footsteps, and was on his feet staring at the door. "I'm glad you've come, Conniston," he said breathlessly. "That boy

Jerry is here, and I've locked him up in case he should get away and tell Beryl."

"Beryl has his hands full at present," said Conniston, grimly. "As to Judas, he's wanted by the police."

"The dickens! What for?"

"For trying to poison Michael Gilroy!"

Bernard stared. "Michael Gilroy? Where is he?"

"At Miss Plantagenet's. It's a long story. I'll tell it to you as soon as I can get my breath. Where's Jerry?"

"Shut up in an empty room," said Bernard. "He came last night at nine or thereabouts. I was outside the castle door and saw him coming. I did not know it was him until I stepped into the hall. When Jerry saw me, his hair rose on end, and he appeared to be frightened out of his life."

"As he well may be," muttered Conniston.

"I collared him, and he tried to get away. But I took him to my room and kept him there. He refused to answer my questions unless I let him go. Of course not being able to trust him, I declined, so I am quite in the dark as to what he has been doing. I then shut him up in an empty room, with a barred window, and sent Victoria in to take him some food. And then a queer thing happened, Conniston. Victoria took him in the food, and was with Jerry for about ten minutes. When she came out she went downstairs and dressed herself in her best. Then she left the castle, and has not been heard of since. I am afraid she has gone to tell Beryl where I am," concluded Bernard, gloomily. "And I may be arrested to-day. I should have looked after Victoria, but I never knew that Jerry would act so promptly. He is a perfect imp for cleverness."

"Don't you trouble your head about being arrested," said Dick, drawing a long breath. "It's not about that Victoria has gone."

"But what can the boy have sent her away for?"

"To warn Beryl. It's a pity you didn't keep the two apart," said Conniston, much vexed. "But as you have been so much in the dark, you can't help the mistake you made. As to arrest, you may have to give yourself up. Mark told me to inform you to hold yourself in readiness."

"I shall be delighted," said Gore, emphatically. "I am about tired of this hole-and-corner business. But what about Michael Gilroy?"

"Sit down," said Conniston, lighting a cigarette. "I will tell you the whole story. It was not told you before, as Mark was afraid, with your impatient disposition, you would insist on turning up and spoiling the whole business."

"I daresay I should have done so," admitted Bernard, frankly. "But, tell me, what's up, old chap? I'm on tenterhooks."

"Well, in the first place, we have discovered that Julius killed your grandfather."

Bernard started to his feet. "What!" he shouted, then calmed down. "I almost expected to hear you say that," he added. "How was the villain found out?"

"You may well call him a villain," rejoined Conniston; "he has tried to poison Michael."

"What for?"

"To get rid of an undesirable witness, I suppose. He employed Jerry to give him some arsenic in a cup of tea. Jerry did so, and then cleared out, Mark com-

municated with Scotland Yard about Jerry, but we never expected he would be here. It's a lucky thing you kept the young wretch prisoner, Bernard."

"This is all very well," said Bernard, who looked bewildered. "But you tell me so many facts without detail that I can't understand how to connect them. Tell me the whole story."

"You won't interrupt if I do?"

"No," said Gore, impatiently, "fire ahead, Dick."

Conniston did so at once, and related all that had hitherto been kept from Gore's knowledge. Bernard listened in silence, save for an occasional ejaculation, which showed how difficult he found it to keep his promise not to interrupt. "And I think Mark was about right to keep these things from you, Bernard," said Conniston, when he ended. "For you are in a wax hearing them now."

"And who wouldn't be in a wax?" demanded Gore, furiously. "Look at the way in which I have been treated. Beryl has made me a scape-goat for his own wickedness. I have been compelled to hide my head. I have been accused of an awful crime—my reputation has been ruined. I should think I am furious, and I have a right to be."

"Bernard! Bernard!" said Dick, shaking his smooth head, "your troubles have taught you little. It was your furious temper that led you to fight with Sir Simon. You then said words which made it probable to outsiders that you committed this crime. And now, when all is on the eve of being cleared up, you have as bad a temper as ever."

"But think of that man Michael masquerading as me," went on Bernard, determined to speak out. "It

was bad enough in London, but that he should dare to come to Alice—oh!" in an access of rage he shook his fist. Then he sat down to recover himself. "You are right, Dick," he remarked, wiping his forehead, "I'm a fool. I'll never learn wisdom. Heaven knows I have had a severe lesson. I will try and control this beastly temper of mine. But, after all, seeing that I love Alice so much, it is not to be wondered at that I should be annoyed at another man taking my place."

"He didn't," replied Conniston, calmly and soothingly. "Miss Malleson guessed the truth about him straight off. She has only used him as an instrument to learn what she could. Don't you fuss, Bernard. What we have to do is to question Judas, and see if he can supplement the revelations of Michael, your half-brother."

"Don't talk about that fellow being my half-brother."

"Well, he is, isn't he?"

"Yes, but—well, I suppose I should rather pity than blame the chap."

"I think so too," said Dick gravely. "Miss Berengaria says there is much good in him. She intends to assist him when she can."

"I shall help him also," said Bernard, after a pause. "The poor fellow can't help his birth, and I owe him something for the way in which my father behaved to his mother."

"This is a change of temper," laughed Conniston.

"Oh, I soon get into a rage and soon get over it," rejoined Gore, impatiently. "But we must examine *this* boy, Dick. He won't answer me though. I have been asking him plenty of questions."

"He'll answer me," said Conniston, rising. "I know about the poisoning. He won't face that."

"But did he really——"

"Yes, he did. I told you he was an imp of darkness, though, to be sure, I never expected he'd begin to murder people at his tender age. Come along, Bernard, show me the captive."

Gore led the way from the room and along a narrow passage. At the end of this was a door, which he opened. It led into a large empty room, but no sooner was the door opened, than a small boy darted out and endeavored to get away. He ran straight into Conniston's arms.

"Now then, young Judas," said Dick, setting the boy on his legs and giving him a good shake. "Come and be tried."

"My lord," gasped Jerry, who was pale with terror, and who had red eyes and disordered hair.

"Yes! I know all about your poisoning, young man."

Jerry dropped on his knees. "I didn't," he declared, "oh lor, I really didn't. Miss Plantagenet ordered the tea. She gave me the cup I——"

"Here," said Conniston, giving him another shake, "stop that rubbish, you young beast. You dare to say such things of my aunt, who has been so kind to you. Hanging is too good for such a scamp. Come along, and answer our questions."

But Jerry, grovelling on the floor, embraced Conniston's riding-boots in an agony of terror. "Oh, please," he whimpered, "I didn't mean to do any harm. Mr. Beryl gave me some white stuff and told me to give it in tea to the sick gentleman. I thought it would do him good!"

With great disgust Dick picked up the young liar in his arms and carried him kicking to the sitting-room, followed by Bernard. When the door was closed, Bernard locked it, and there was no chance of Jerry getting away, as the window was thirty feet from the ground. Gore took a seat in one arm-chair and Conniston threw himself into the other, after flinging Jerry on the hearth-rug. The boy lay there, kicking and howling, nearly out of his wits with terror.

"Shut up!" said Dick, sharply. "You have to answer questions."

"I sha'n't," said Jerry. "You'll hang me."

"There's no chance of that, worse luck," said Conniston, regretfully.

On hearing this, the boy sat up. "Isn't he dead?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh!" mocked Bernard, "and you thought the white stuff would do the sick gentleman good—you young scoundrel! No. He isn't dead, Lord Conniston says, but small thanks to you."

"Oh!" Jerry seemed at once relieved and disappointed. "I won't get the two thousand pounds now."

"And you won't be hanged either, though you richly deserve it."

"I don't. I've done nothing," said Jerry, sulkily.

"You have attempted to poison Michael Gilroy——"

"Do you know his name, Mr. Grant?"

"Yes! And you know mine, Master Jerry. Come now, you must reply to the questions which Lord Conniston wishes to put."

"Sha'n't," said Jerry, and set his pretty, tearful face firmly.

"Judas," said Conniston, taking his riding-whip from

a near table, "there's only one course to be pursued with boys like you. If you don't speak out, I'll give you one of the finest thrashings you ever had in your life."

"I'll have an action against you then," snapped Jerry, very pale.

"Certainly. But you'll have to get out of prison to bring it."

"Prison?" Jerry quavered and shook all over.

"Yes, prison," mimicked Conniston. "Do you think you can behave like a young criminal and get off scot free?"

"I was deceived by Mr. Beryl. He's older than I am. I am only a boy."

"You are old enough to be hanged, at all events."

"You said I wouldn't be, my lord."

"That depends upon my good word," said Conniston, bluffing; "and you won't have that unless you confess."

"Confess what, my lord?"

"All about this business connected with Beryl," put in Gore. "It was you who led me to the house in Crimea Square."

"I didn't—I didn't!" And then Jerry uttered a howl as Conniston's whip came across his back.

"Hold your tongue and answer."

"How can I hold my tongue and answer at the same time, my lord?"

Conniston took out his watch. "I'll give you two minutes to make up your mind to talk sense. You are clever enough when it suits you. If you won't speak, I'll thrash you thoroughly, and then take you up to be handed to the police."

"And if I do, my lord?"

"I'll spare you the thrashing. But you must go to the police. You are being enquired for, young Judas. Only by confessing the whole can you avoid danger to your neck."

"Only Mr. Beryl can get me into trouble, and you won't find him," said Jerry, tauntingly. "I sent Victoria to him with a letter last night, and she must have caught the eleven train to London. I daresay she saw Mr. Beryl last night, and he's got away."

"Why did you act so promptly?" asked Gore.

"Because I saw you, Sir Bernard. I knew the game was up, and that you were playing the fool with Mr. Beryl in getting that will signed."

"Ah! so we all were," said Conniston, calmly. "The game is up, so you had better explain your share in it. Begin from the time you were kicked out of Taberley's for stealing."

"I sha'n't," said Jerry. "I don't believe you can hurt me."

Dick's patience was exhausted. He caught the young wretch by the scruff of the neck and thrashed him thoroughly. Jerry, who had never been beaten before in his life, wept and howled and begged for mercy. At last Conniston threw him again on the rug thoroughly cowed, and between sobs Jerry expressed his willingness to reply to whatever questions were put to him. The examination was conducted as though Conniston was a barrister and Jerry a witness. Bernard, in the character of a reporter, went to the writing-table and took notes. Jerry stood wiping his eyes and replying tearfully.

"When did you meet Beryl?" asked Dick.

"At Taberley's. He knew I was Mrs. Moon's grand-

son, as he saw me here at one time. When I was kicked out, he promised to help me. I was told to watch Sir Bernard, and I did. I saw you, my lord, with Sir Bernard in the Park. I was always watching Sir Bernard."

"I see. That was why you sold matches. Well, and it was you who told Beryl that Sir Bernard was at Mr. Durham's house on that night?"

"Yes," snuffled Jerry. "I saw him go in. I then went to the theatre, and Mr. Beryl came out to see me. I told him, and he said I was to bring Sir Bernard to the Square."

"In any case, Beryl intended Sir Bernard should be brought there on that night?"

"Yes. About eleven o'clock or a little earlier. And I waited outside on that night and——"

"You needn't explain that," said Gore, turning his head. "I remember how you drew me to the place. Did Beryl tell you to speak of the Red Light?"

"Yes. He said you would come if I talked of a lady and the Red Window. And Sir Simon had arranged the red light with a lamp and a handkerchief, Mr. Beryl told me afterwards. I didn't know it on the night. All I had to do was to bring you to the Square."

"And what about the whistle you gave?"

"That was to let Mr. Beryl know you were outside?"

"Was Beryl in the house at that time?"

"No," said Jerry, after a few moments of thought. "He should have been there, but he afterwards told me that he had come earlier and had gone away."

"Did he intend to murder Sir Simon?"

"I can't say," replied the boy, doubtfully. "He *made that chap, Gilroy, dress up as you, and court the*

housemaid. His idea was to get Sir Simon to think you were making love to Jane. I think he wished to bring you to the house, so that on seeing the red light you might go in, and then Sir Simon would have quarrelled with you for loving Jane. I don't think he intended murder. But Michael Gilroy came and saw Sir Simon, and then bolted when he saw the Italian, thinking he was a detective. He told Mr. Beryl that the next day!"

"Who came to the house on that night, Jerry? State the time they came also."

Jerry thought again. "The Italian came first, and while he was in the room, about ten I think, Michael came. Then Michael bolted, and the Italian followed. Then shortly after ten Mr. Beryl came from the theatre——"

"Did you see him?"

"No," rejoined Jerry, tartly. "How could I? I was leading you then."

"Didn't you see Beryl at all that night—I mean again after you saw him to tell him where Sir Bernard was?"

"Yes, I did," said Jerry, rubbing his legs which were sore. "I may as well tell the truth. Just as we turned into Crimea Square, Sir Bernard, I brushed past Mr. Beryl."

"How could you recognize him in the fog?"

"I did. I saw him under a lamp. He was going back to the theatre and was very pale. Then I cut to look after Sir Bernard. I gave the whistle and then I cleared. Next day Mr. Beryl told me all that had taken place."

"Did you think he had committed the crime?"

"No, I thought that Michael had. He had forged a check, and I thought that he would quarrel with Sir Simon and kill him."

The boy spoke in all earnestness, so apparently Julius had been clever enough to keep the fact of his own guilt secret. But for the handkerchief it would have been difficult to have accused him. Conniston asked a final question. "How much do you get for all this?"

"Two thousand pounds if Michael died."

"If you poisoned him?" asked Bernard.

"Yes," said Jerry, sulkily. "I did intend to poison him, as I wanted the two thousand pounds. I came on here, and was then going to hide in London. After that, I should have sent for Victoria, and when Mr. Beryl paid, we would have gone to America."

"And why didn't you carry out this clever plan?" asked Gore.

Jerry turned still more sulky. "Because I saw you, and then I knew the game was up. Even if Michael had died, you would have been able to claim the property."

"Then Beryl really believed I was dead?"

"Yes, he did—so did I. When Victoria wrote me that you were here, I thought you were Michael. And when Michael came over to the Bower, I thought he had come from here. If I had known the truth——"

"Well?" said Bernard, dryly.

Jerry smiled amiably. "I'd have chucked Mr. Beryl and offered to prove your innocence if you gave me the two thousand. No," added Jerry, with a charming smile, "I'd have asked three thousand from you."

The young men looked at one another in wonder at this precocious criminality. "Can you prove my innocence?" asked Bernard.

"Yes," said Jerry.

"You know who killed Sir Simon?"

"Yes, I do. But I won't tell till I have seen Beryl," and this was all they could get out of him, in spite of threats of further whippings and cajolings. So Jerry was taken back to his room, and Bernard arranged with Conniston that the boy should be taken to London that very day.

"And then, when Durham lets me know, I'll surrender myself. But I wonder who killed my grandfather after all."

"Julius Beryl," said Conniston.

"Hum! I don't know. This boy seems to have some idea. I tell you what, Dick, I shouldn't be surprised if the boy did it himself."

CHAPTER XXII

THE TRUTH

The arrest of Sir Bernard Gore made a great sensation. It was generally supposed that he was dead, and his unexpected appearance surprised every one. Also, as he was believed to be guilty, the public was amazed that he should thus thrust himself into jeopardy. But more thoughtful people saw in Gore's surrender a proof of his innocence, and argued very rightly that were he guilty of the murder of Sir Simon, he would not come forward as he had done to stand his trial.

An additional surprise came in the arrest of Michael, who was said to be the half-brother of Gore, and to resemble him very closely. A rumor got about—one knew how—that this resemblance between the two would be made the basis of the defence. Also, the boy, Jerry Moon, who was implicated in the matter, was in charge of the police, and it was expected that he would make startling revelations. On the whole, there was every chance that the forthcoming trial would be extremely interesting. Every one looked forward with great expectation to the time when Sir Bernard would be placed in the dock. Inspector Groom, formerly in charge of the case, was now attending to the matter again. He said very little, although the reporters tried to make him give his opinion. But, from the few words

he let drop, it would seem that he believed firmly in the innocence of the accused man.

"I don't see anything about Beryl in the papers," said Conniston, when at Durham's office.

"There is nothing to say about him at present," replied the lawyer. "We have not caught him yet, and perhaps never may."

"Victoria warned him, then?"

"Yes. That imp of a boy wrote a letter stating that Bernard was at Cove Castle, and advising flight. Victoria caught a train shortly before eleven and came straight to Beryl's rooms, the address of which she received from Jerry. Beryl—as Jerry had done—saw that the game was up, and realized that we, knowing Gore to be alive, had been simply playing with the imposture of Michael. He bolted that same night and managed to cross to the Continent. At least, we suppose so, as no trace of him can be found."

"What will you do about him, then?"

Durham shrugged his shoulders. "There is nothing can be done," he answered. "With the evidence of Michael, Jerry and Miss Randolph and Tolomeo, we shall be able to prove Bernard's innocence and his cousin's guilt. Bernard will be set free without a stain on his character. But as to how Beryl will be arrested, or whether he will ever be punished, I am unable to give an opinion."

"What about Mrs. Gilroy?"

"Ah, we want her. But we cannot find out where she is. Even her son doesn't know. He would speak out if he did know, as I fancy he is sincerely repentant for the trouble this new edition of the Corsican Brothers has caused."

“But had you not some plan to lure Mrs. Gilroy out of her hiding?”

Durham searched amongst his papers and produced a journal. “Read that,” said he, pointing to a column.

It was an article dealing with the case, in which the writer hinted that Michael was guilty and Bernard innocent. It was also stated that Michael would certainly be put in the dock, and that sufficient evidence was in the power of the prosecution to procure his condemnation. The whole article was written strongly, and after reading it, Conniston, had he not known the true facts of the case, would have fancied Michael guilty. He said as much. Durham smiled.

“That is exactly the feeling I wish to convey to Mrs. Gilroy,” he declared, taking back the paper. “She, if any one, can prove the guilt of Beryl, but for some reason—perhaps for money—she is hiding. If she reads that paragraph she will at once come forward to save her son, and then we’ll be able to prove Beryl’s guilt beyond a doubt.”

“But she may not take in the particular journal,” said Conniston.

“Oh, this is only one paper. Within the next few days that article will be copied in every newspaper in London. Mrs. Gilroy is bound, wherever she is, to hear of the arrest of her son, and of Bernard giving himself up. To learn what is taking place she will read whatever papers she can get hold of. Then she will see that article, and if it doesn’t bring her forward to save Michael and condemn Beryl, I am very much mistaken.”

“It sounds rather like contempt of court,” said Dick, gravely.

Durham laughed. "It is, in a way. Every man has a right to be considered innocent in English law until his guilt is proved. But I arranged with Scotland Yard that this article should appear in the hope that Mrs. Gilroy—an important witness, mind you—should be brought forward. I can't exactly tell you all the details, but you may be sure that the thing has been done legally. Besides," argued Durham, calmly, "seeing we have such a strong proof of Beryl's guilt, there is no doubt that Michael will have a fair trial."

"I say," said Conniston, rising to take his leave, "do you know it's Bernard's idea that Jerry might have committed the crime. It seems to me that Beryl is too great a coward to do it himself."

"Stuff!" said Durham, quite in the style of Miss Berengaria. "The boy could not have possibly strangled the old man. He was leading Bernard to the Square to within a few minutes of the time when Mrs. Gilroy came out shouting murder. No, Conniston, Beryl is the man, as is proved by his handkerchief. He came to the house immediately Tolomeo left, since he passed that man in the Square. The boy saw him departing, after Bernard was lured to be on the spot. Beryl was hurrying back to the theatre to arrange for his *alibi*. Everything was beautifully arranged. But for the discovery of Michael, we might have learned nothing. Also Tolomeo's evidence is valuable. Mrs. Gilroy, having been in the house at the time, is the woman who knows all. Doubtless Beryl threatened to denounce her son, and that was why she accused Bernard, counting on the resemblance to carry the matter through."

"What an infernally wicked woman!" said Dick, angrily.

“ Oh! not at all. Mrs. Gilroy is a mother, and she naturally would sacrifice the whole world to save her son. Besides, she may have acted on the spur of the moment, and then had to go on with the matter.”

“ Well,” said Conniston, putting on his hat, “ I sincerely hope your net will capture her.”

“ It is sure to. A woman who would try and save her son by accusing an innocent man would not remain quiet to see him hanged. By the way, Miss Berengaria is in town, I believe? ”

“ Yes, with Miss Randolph and Alice. They are stopping at the Waterloo Hotel, Guelph Street. I believe they expect you along to dinner this evening.”

Durham nodded. “ I received a note from the old lady, and intend to come. By the way, Dick, I hope you are fascinating her. Remember, she can leave you five thousand a year, and can't last much longer.”

“ I believe Miss Berengaria will see her century,” said Dick. “ Besides, now you have my affairs in order, I have enough to live on.”

“ But not enough to marry on,” said Durham, significantly.

Conniston flushed. “ If you speak of Lucy,” he said, “ she has a little money of her own, and our two incomes will keep us alive.”

“ It won't keep up the dignity of the title.”

“ Oh, the deuce take the dignity of that,” said Conniston, carelessly. “ In this democratic age who cares for titles? ”

“ The Americans, Dick. You ought to marry one.”

“ I'll marry Lucy, who is the sweetest girl in the world,” said Dick, firmly. “ We understand one another, *and as soon as this business is over, Mark——*”

"You will marry."

"No. Bernard and I will go out to the Front."

"What! Does Bernard say that?"

"Yes. He intends to go back to his Imperial Yeomanry uniform, and I honor him for it," said Dick, with some heat. "Bernard is not the man to sneak out of doing his duty. And Miss Malleson approves. I go out to the Front also, and daresay I shall manage to get a place of sorts, from which to take pot-shots at the enemy."

"But, my dear fellow," said Durham, much disturbed, "you may be killed."

"'Naught was never in danger,'" said Conniston, opening the door. "You get Bernard out of this scrape, Mark, and then come and see us start. We'll return covered with glory."

"And without legs or arms," said Durham, crossly. "Just as if Bernard hadn't enough danger, he must needs run his head into more. Go away, Dick. It's your feather brain that has made him stick to his guns."

"Not a bit," retorted Conniston, slipping out, "it's Bernard's own idea. Good-bye, Mark. I hope you will recover your temper by the time we meet at Aunt Berengaria's hospitable table."

Things fell out as Durham prophesied. The article was published in all the London and country journals, and provoked both praise and blame. Many said that it was wrong to hint that a man was guilty before he had been tried. Others pointed to the sufferings that the innocent Bernard Gore had undergone, and insisted that even before the trial his name should be cleared. Those in authority took no notice of the storm thus raised, which seemed to confirm Durham's statement

that the article had been inspired from high legal quarters. But the result of the publication and discussion of the matter was that one day a woman came to see Durham at his office.

The moment she entered he guessed who she was, even although she was veiled. Clothed from head to foot in black, and looking tragic enough for a Muse, poor soul, for certainly she had cause, Mrs. Gilroy raised her veil and examined the keen face of the lawyer.

"You did not expect to see me?" she asked, taking the seat he pointed to silently.

Durham was not going to tell her that the article had been published to draw her forth, as she might have taken flight and suspected a trap.

"It is a surprise," he said artfully. "And I am at a loss to understand why you have come."

"To save my son," said Mrs. Gilroy, looking at him with haggard eyes.

"Michael Gilroy?"

"Michael Gore. He has a right to his father's name.

"Pardon me, I think not. Bernard Gore is the heir."

"Ah!" said the woman, bitterly, and clasping her hands with a swift, nervous gesture. "He has all the luck—the title—the money—the——"

"You must admit," said Durham, politely, "that he had had very bad luck for the most part."

"His own foolishness is the cause of it."

"Did you come to tell me this?"

Mrs. Gilroy sat quite still for a moment, and Durham noticed that even what good looks she had were gone. *Her cheeks were fallen in, her eyes were sunken,*

her drab hair was streaked with white, and her face wore a terrible expression of despair and sorrow. "I have come to tell you all I know," she said. "I would not do so, save for two things. One is, that I wish to save my son, who is absolutely innocent; the other, that I am dying."

"Dying? I hope not."

"I am dying," said Mrs. Gilroy, firmly. "I have suffered for many years from an incurable disease—it doesn't matter what. But I cannot live long, and, but for my son, I should have ended my miserable life long ago, owing to the pain I suffer. Oh the pain—the pain—the pain!" she moaned, rocking to and fro as Michael had done.

Durham was sincerely sorry for her, although he knew she was not a good woman. "Let me get you some brandy," he said.

"No," replied Mrs. Gilroy, waving her hand. "Call in some clerk who can take down what I have to say. I will probably speak quickly, as my strength will not last long. I have come from a hospital to see you. Get a clerk who writes rapidly, and be quick."

Durham called in a clerk and gave the order, then turned to his client. "Was it on account of going to the hospital that you left Gore Hall?" he asked.

Mrs. Gilroy, still rocking, bowed her head. "Did you want me?" she asked.

"I wanted to tell you that Michael came to Miss Berengaria's to——"

"Michael. He came there. Why?"

"To pass himself off as Bernard."

"Ah, that was part of Beryl's scheme to get the money."

"Was it part of his scheme to poison Michael?" said Durham.

Mrs. Gilroy started to her feet, flushed with anger.

"Did he do that, Mr. Durham?" she asked. "Did he dare to——"

"Yes. He got Michael to sign a will as Bernard, leaving all the money to him, and then employed Jerry to poison him. Jerry should not have done so for two or three days, but he was eager to get away, as he was afraid of being found out, so he poisoned your son within a few hours of the signing of the false will."

"The villain!" said Mrs. Gilroy, thinking of Beryl. "But he shall not escape. I have come to tell you all. I wish I could see him hanged. He is the cause of all the trouble. I saw in the papers that Sir Bernard was alive," she added; "how did he escape?"

"He swam across the river and went down to Cove Castle. We knew all the time he was there in hiding."

"Who knew?"

"Myself, Lord Conniston, Miss Berengaria and Miss Malleson."

"So you played with Michael?" said Mrs. Gilroy, drawing a breath.

"Yes. Miss Malleson and Miss Plantagenet both knew he was not the true Bernard. Your hint about your son being like his father showed me who Michael was, and I told the others. Yes, Mrs. Gilroy, I allowed Michael to sign the false will, so as to trap Beryl. But, believe me, had I known Beryl intended to poison your son, I should not have allowed the matter to go so far."

"You could do nothing else," said Mrs. Gilroy, sadly. "Both Michael and myself have suffered. I was de-

ceived by a false marriage, and the sins of the father have been visited on the child."

"That is true enough," said Durham. "But for the sin of Walter Gore, Michael, with his wonderful resemblance to Bernard, would not have been born, and Beryl would not have been able to plot as he did."

"Well! well! He is an exile and has been punished."

"When you can prove his guilt, as I suppose you intend to do," said the lawyer, grimly, "I'll do my best to have him brought back and hanged. You will be pleased at that."

Mrs. Gilroy laughed in a hollow manner, and cast a strange look at the lawyer. "I should be pleased indeed," she said, "but there's no such luck. Hanging is not Beryl's dukkeripen."

"That's a gypsy word."

"I was found and brought up by gypsies," said Mrs. Gilroy, indifferently, "although I am not of Romany blood. But I learned a few secrets from the Romany," added Mrs. Gilroy, her eyes flashing, "and one of them relating to drabbing—if you know what that means—may come in useful this day."

"What does drabbing mean?"

"It has to do with drows," said Mrs. Gilroy, laughing and rocking. "I daresay you'll know the meaning of both words before the end of this day." And she began to sing softly:—

“The Romany cha,
And the Romany chal,
Shall jaw tasulor,
To drab the bawlor,
And dook the gry?”

Durham thought that her illness had affected her head. He did not say anything, but resolved to get her examination over as quickly as possible. A clerk entered at the moment, carrying a typewriting machine, which he set down on a small table near at hand.

"I think it will be best that your words should be taken down by the machine," said Durham, turning to Mrs. Gilroy, "as the writer can keep up with your speech."

"As you please," said Mrs. Gilroy, coolly. "I have to sign my statement in the presence of witnesses, you and this young man."

"But why do you——"

"There, there," said the woman, impatiently, "don't I tell you I have very little strength left. Are you ready?"

"Yes, madam," said the clerk, who was addressed.

"Then don't interrupt. I am about to tell you strange things," and she began forthwith, the clerk taking down all she said as quickly as she spoke. Durham, pencil in hand, made a note occasionally.

"I am a foundling," said Mrs. Gilroy, smoothly and swiftly. "I was picked up by some gypsies called Lovel, in the New Forest. I was with them till I came of age. I was then a pretty girl. In our wanderings we came to Hurseton. There I saw Walter Gore at a fair. I did not know he was married, as we stopped at Hurseton only a short time. We went away. Walter followed and said he loved me. He married me at last. We went abroad—then came back to London. When my child, Michael, was born, I learned the truth, for Walter had deserted me. I went down to Hurseton to see Sir Simon. He sent me to the States with Michael, my son. Walter sent me money."

"This is slightly different to what Michael said," remarked Durham. "I understood that you never saw Sir Simon till you returned from the States."

"Michael doesn't know everything," said Mrs. Gilroy, impatiently. "I tell my own story in my own way. Do not interrupt. I remained in the States for a long time. Then Walter died, and his true wife also. I came to see Sir Simon again. He was sorry for me, and offered to make me the housekeeper at Gore Hall, which should have been my home, but he insisted that Michael should return to the States. My boy did so, in charge of some friends. Sir Simon promised to give me five hundred a year when he died, so that I could help my boy. He only left me one hundred, the mean villain! I supported my son out of my wages. He grew weary of the States and came to England. Sir Simon was angry, but he got him a situation in London, on condition that the boy never came to Hurseton. That was why no one knew there was any one resembling Sir Bernard so closely. Well, in London Michael fell in with Julius Beryl——"

"I know all that," said Durham, quickly. "Michael told me. I know he was employed by Beryl to impersonate Bernard so that Sir Simon's anger should be aroused."

"Well, then, you know a good deal," said Mrs. Gilroy, "but not all. No, indeed," she added, smiling strangely, "not all."

"Tell me the events of that night, and how Beryl killed Sir Simon."

Mrs. Gilroy laughed again. "I am coming to that. You will be much surprised when I tell you all. Bernard was in town as a soldier; Beryl got Michael to

masquerade. I never knew it was my own son who courted Jane Riordan. Had I known, I should have put a stop to the business. I really thought from the description given, that Jane's lover was Bernard. I wanted Sir Simon, whom I told, to throw over Bernard and let my son have the property. He would have done so, but that Michael had forged a check——”

“I know about that also.”

“Very good. We will pass that,” said the woman. “Well, Sir Simon was angry. I saw there was no chance for my boy, and cast about how else to get the money for him. Beryl informed me that he intended by means of the Red Window and Jerry to lure Bernard to the Square, in the hope that when he saw the red light he would come up and have a quarrel with his grandfather.”

“What about ?” asked Durham.

“About Bernard's supposed courting of the housemaid. That was why Beryl employed my son to masquerade. He knew that Sir Simon was a proud man, and would not readily forgive such a thing. He knew Sir Simon was regretting his quarrel with Bernard, and wished to give it renewed life. Well, then, Beryl arranged to go to the theatre. He said he would come round after ten or near eleven to see if the old man had quarrelled with Bernard. He hoped that he would be able to get the order to turn Bernard out. He did not know, though, at what time Bernard would arrive. But when he did, I was to open the door to him.”

“Jerry's whistle was to be the signal,” said the lawyer.

“Yes. Then I was to show Bernard up, and the quarrel would then take place.”

“ Beryl did not really intend murder, then? ”

“ Mr. Durham, you will harp on that, ” said Mrs. Gilroy, impatiently. “ Wait till I speak out. You see how matters were arranged for that night. Miss Randolph and Beryl went to the theatre so that they should not be mixed up in the quarrel. ”

“ But Miss Randolph knew nothing ? ”

“ Of course not. Beryl knew she was friendly to Bernard, and wished her out of the way. For that reason, he took her to the theatre. I then suggested to Sir Simon that probably Bernard knew of the house from you, and might come back. Sir Simon had sent for him to the kitchen, but my son, being afraid, ran away. Sir Simon laughed at the idea of the red lamp, but he did not forbid my arranging it. I got a lamp and placed it before the window. Then I placed across the window a red bandana of Sir Simon’s. From the outside the signal could be plainly seen. ”

“ What happened next ? ” asked Durham, while the typewriter clicked in a most cheerful manner.

“ Various things, ” retorted Mrs. Gilroy, “ and not those you expect to hear. I sat downstairs, waiting and working. Sir Simon was in the room with the red light showing through the window. The trap was laid. It only remained for Jerry to bring Bernard to fall into it. Shortly before ten an Italian called. ”

“ Bernard’s uncle, Signor Tolomeo ? ”

“ Yes. I knew him, and took him up to Sir Simon, thinking his presence might make the quarrel worse. All Beryl and I wished to do was to prevent Bernard and Sir Simon from becoming reconciled. Well, Tolomeo saw Sir Simon, and while he was with him, my son arrived. I asked him what he was doing there. He

told me then that he had been masquerading as Bernard, and informed me about the check. He was afraid of trouble in connection with it, as by means of it, Beryl held him in his power. He came to make a clean breast of it to Sir Simon. I tried to stop him going up——”

“But why?” interrupted the lawyer, quickly.

“I had my own plans, with which Michael’s presence interfered,” said Mrs. Gilroy, coolly. “However, he would not be overruled, and went up to see Sir Simon. The old man concealed Tolomeo behind a curtain, and then quarrelled with Michael about the check. There was a great row, as Sir Simon threatened to have Michael arrested. In the middle of the quarrel Tolomeo came out. Michael took him for a detective, and fled. He ran out before I could stop him. Then Tolomeo departed also. I went up the stairs and implored Sir Simon not to arrest my son. Then Beryl arrived nearly at the half hour.”

“How did he enter?”

“Tolomeo, running after Michael, left the door open. Beryl tried to pacify the old man. I remained in the room all the time——”

“Then you saw the murder.”

“Wait a moment,” said Mrs. Gilroy, rising in the excitement of her tale. “Beryl and the old man quarrelled. Then Sir Simon told him to go back to the theatre. Beryl, thinking he had offended Sir Simon past recall, wept. Yes,” said Mrs. Gilroy, with a sneer, “he cried like a child. Sir Simon was disgusted. He snatched his handkerchief from him, and threw it on the floor. Beryl was ordered out of the house again. He left and went back to the theatre. The interview took only a few minutes.”

"But the murder?"

"I committed it," said Mrs. Gilroy, simply.

Durham and the clerk both jumped and stared.

"You?" said the lawyer.

"Yes," said Mrs. Gilroy, coolly. "You have been on the wrong tack all along. You thought that Bernard killed Sir Simon—that my son did so—that Tolomeo did so—that Beryl was guilty. But you were all wrong. I, and none other, killed Sir Simon."

"You say this to save your son?"

"No. Tolomeo can prove that Sir Simon was alive when Michael fled from the house. Beryl can prove that I was alone with Sir Simon. I was late—the servants were in bed. I determined to kill the old man."

"Why, in Heaven's name?"

"Because I saw that when Bernard came he would be arrested, and there would be a chance for my son getting the money. Then Sir Simon intended to have Michael arrested—I wished to stop that. Then, again, for years Sir Simon had insulted and humiliated me. I hated him fervently. Oh, I had plenty of reasons to kill the old brute. I went downstairs and got the chloroform."

"Had you that ready?" asked Durham, horrified at this recital.

"Yes and no. I didn't buy it then. I always thought that Sir Simon kept his will at the Hall, and I bought the chloroform months before, hoping one night to make him insensible, so that I could look at the will. But the chloroform was not wasted," said Mrs. Gilroy, with a pale smile. "I brought it with me to town—always ready to watch for my chance of rendering my master insensible and of reading the will. I wanted to see if he left Michael anything, and if he

had really left me the five hundred he promised. Besides, in his death, I saw a chance of getting rid of Bernard by hanging, and of having my son acknowledged as the heir."

"But Beryl? You reckoned without Beryl?"

"No," said Mrs. Gilroy, calmly. "You forget the handkerchief. I took that down with me, and soaked it with chloroform. I guessed that the handkerchief would condemn Beryl, should it be necessary to accuse any one. I did not foresee what would happen," added the woman, impatiently. "I only acted as I saw things then. I came upstairs, and while pretending to arrange Sir Simon's cushions, I clapped the handkerchief over his mouth. He struggled for a long time. It is not easy to chloroform people," said the woman, pensively. "I thought they went off at once, but Sir Simon was some time struggling."

"Go on—go on," said Durham in disgust. "Get this over."

Mrs. Gilroy laughed and drew her shawl tightly about her spare figure.

"After he was insensible," she continued, "I strangled him with his own handkerchief, after tying Beryl's handkerchief across his mouth. I then went down and took my work up again while waiting for Bernard."

Durham made a gesture of abhorrence. "You could work?"

"Why not?" said Mrs. Gilroy. "There was nothing else to do—the old man was dead—the trap was set. All I had to do was to wait till Bernard walked into it."

"Had you no regrets for that?"

"None. Bernard Gore robbed my boy of his birth-right."

“Bernard was the eldest son, even though Michael had been born in——”

“I know all about that,” said Mrs. Gilroy, waving her hand, “spare me your preaching. Is there anything more you wish to know?”

“About this plot to get the false will signed?”

“I knew little of that. I accused Bernard, and he escaped. Beryl guessed I murdered the old man, but for his own sake he held his tongue. I heard Bernard’s whistle, or rather Jerry’s, and went out crying murder. The rest you know. Then I played my part. I left the diary at the Hall for Miss Randolph to find, as I thought Tolomeo might be accused. I fancied, as things turned out, it would be better to have Bernard back, and get him to do something for Michael. That was why I prepared the diary.”

“It was a false entry?” said Durham, looking at her.

Mrs. Gilroy yawned. “Yes, it was. I prepared it, as I say. I am getting very tired,” she added. “Let me sign the paper and go.”

“You must sign the paper, and you must be arrested,” said Durham.

“As you please,” said Mrs. Gilroy, perfectly calmly. Then Durham sent for Inspector Groom, and, pending his arrival, Mrs. Gilroy signed the paper, with Durham and the clerk as witnesses. She then fell asleep, and Durham went out to receive Groom. They talked together for some time, then entered the room. Mrs. Gilroy was lying on the floor in convulsions, and laughed when she saw them.

“Good Heavens!” cried Groom. “She has poisoned herself!”

“I have taken drows,” gasped Mrs. Gilroy. “That’s my dukkerin!” and died hard.

CHAPTER XXIII

A YEAR LATER

It was midsummer, and Miss Berengaria's garden was a sight. Such splendid colors, such magnificent blossoms, such triumphs of the floricultural art, had never been seen outside the walls of a flower show. The weather was exceedingly warm, and on this particular day there was not a cloud in the sky. Miss Plantagenet pottered about her garden, clipping and arranging as usual, and seemed to be in the very best of spirits. And well she might be, for this was a red-letter day with her.

Under the shade of a large elm-tree sat Durham, in the most unprofessional tweed suit, and beside him, Alice, radiant in a white dress. She looked particularly pretty, and her face was a most becoming color. Every now and then she would glance at the watch on her wrist, and Durham laughed as he saw how frequently she referred to it.

"The train won't be here for another hour," he said, smiling. "You will see Bernard soon enough, Miss Malleson."

"Oh, dear me," sighed Alice, "can I ever see him soon enough? It seems like eleven years instead of eleven months since he went away. I wish he hadn't gone."

"Well," said Durham, following with his eyes the *spare little figure* of Miss Berengaria fitting about

amongst the flowers, "I didn't approve of it at the time, and I told Conniston so. But now I think it was just as well Bernard did keep to his original intention and go to the Front. It is advisable there should be an interval between the new life and the old."

"The new life?" asked Alice, flushing.

"He is coming home to be married to you," said Durham.

"And with a bullet in his arm," sighed Alice. "I shall have to nurse him back to health before we can marry."

"Miss Randolph will be occupied in the same pleasing task with Conniston," replied Durham, lazily, "and I envy both my friends."

"You needn't," laughed Miss Malleeson, opening her sunshade which cast a delicate pink hue on her cheeks. "Poor Bernard has been wounded and Lord Conniston has been down with enteric fever."

"I am glad they have got off so easily. Bernard might have been shot, you know."

Alice shuddered and grew pale. "Don't, Mr. Durham!"

"That was why I feared about his going out," said he. "I thought it would be a pity, after all he passed through, that he should be killed by a Boer bullet. But he has only temporarily lost the use of his arm; he has been mentioned for gallantry in the despatches; and he is coming home to marry the most charming girl in the world—I quote from his own letter," finished Durham, smiling.

"And Lord Conniston?"

"He is coming also to marry Miss Randolph. Both weddings will take place on the same day, and Connis-

ton has escaped the dangers of the war with a slight touch of fever. But why tell you all this—you know it as well as I do.”

“What’s that?” asked Miss Berengaria, coming up to the pair.

“I was only discussing Miss Malleson’s future life,” said Durham.

“Ah,” sighed the old lady, sitting down. “What I shall do without her I don’t know.”

“Dear aunt,” said Alice, kissing the faded cheek, “I shall not be far away. The Hall is within visiting distance.”

“That’s all very well,” said Miss Berengaria. “But Bernard will want you all to himself, and small blame to him. What is the time?”

Alice glanced at her watch. “It’s nearly three, and the train arrives at half-past,” she said. “Oh, I wish we could meet them.”

“Not at all,” rejoined Miss Berengaria, brusquely, “better wait here with Lucy. She will be over soon. I don’t want a scene of kissing and weeping on the platform. But, I must say, I am glad both those boys are back.”

“You will have them as near neighbors, Miss Berengaria,” said the lawyer. “Bernard at Gore Hall and Conniston at the castle.”

“I hope he and Lucy won’t live there,” said the old lady, rubbing her nose. “A dreadfully damp place. I went over there the other day to tell Mrs Moon about Jerry.”

“Have you had good reports of him?”

“So, so. The reformatory he was put into seems to be a good one, and the boys are well looked after. But

Jerry is a tree which will grow crooked. He seems to have been giving a lot of trouble."

"Yet he was lucky to get off as he did," said Durham. "The judge might have sent him to jail instead of into a reformatory."

"And he'll land in jail some day," said Alice, shaking her head. "At least, Bernard seems to think so."

"I fancy Bernard is about right," replied Durham. "The lad is a born criminal. I wonder how he inherited such a tainted nature."

Miss Berengaria sat up briskly. "I can tell you," she said. "Mrs. Moon informed me that her son—Jerry's father—was a desperate scamp, and also that several of her husband's people had come to bad ends."

"To rope ends, I suppose, as Jerry will come," said Durham. "However, he is safe for the next three years in his reformatory. When he comes out, we will see what will happen. What about your other *protégé*, Miss Berengaria."

"Michael Gilroy?"

"Yes. Has he taken that name for good?"

"He has. It's the only name he is entitled to. How glad I am that the poor creature was acquitted after that dreadful trial. I am sure there is good in him."

"So Bernard thought, and that was why he assisted him," said Alice.

"I think you put in a good word for him, Miss Malleson."

Alice assented. "I was sorry for the poor fellow. While I nursed him I saw much good in him. And, remember, that he had intended to tell me who he was when he arrived, only he was so ill."

"And when he saw that you fancied he was Ber-

nard, he accepted the situation," said Durham, ironically. "I wonder he could have thought you so easily taken in, knowing that you knew Bernard so intimately."

"Well, I don't think he was quite himself during that illness," said Alice, pensively. "Had he been better, he would certainly have doubted the fact of aunty's and my beliefs. A few questions from me, and he would have been exposed, even had I truly believed he was Bernard."

"And he must have wondered how you never put the questions."

"Perhaps. But he thought I was considering his health. However, he spoke up well at the trial, and quite explained Bernard's innocence."

Durham shrugged his shoulders. "The serpent in the bamboo. He was forced to be honest at the trial for his own sake."

"Don't be hard on him," said Miss Berengaria, suddenly. "I received a letter from him yesterday. He is doing very well in America, and with the money Bernard gave him he has bought a farm. Also, he hopes to marry."

"I wonder will he tell his future wife anything of his past life?"

"Not if he is wise," said Durham, looking at Alice, who had spoken. "By the way, Miss Berengaria, does he mention his mother?"

"No," replied the old lady, promptly. "Drat you, Durham! why should the boy mention his mother at this point? She has been dead all these months. Poor soul! her end was a sad one. I never heard, though, of what poison she died."

"A Romany poison they call drows," explained Durham, quickly. "The gipsies use it to poison pigs."

"Why do they wish to poison pigs?"

"Because, if they kill a pig in that way, the farmer to whom it belongs, thinking the animal has died a natural death, gives it to the gipsies and they eat it."

"Ugh!" Miss Berengaria shuddered. "I'll look well after my own pigs. So the poor creature killed herself with that drug?"

"I don't know that it is a drug," said Durham. "I can't explain what it is. She hinted that I would know what drows meant before the end of the day, and I did. While I was telling Inspector Groom about her confession, she poisoned herself in my office. I thought she was asleep, but she evidently was watching for her opportunity to make away with herself."

"Ugh!" said Miss Berengaria, again. "I wonder you can bear to sit in that office after such an occurrence."

"How lucky it was that she signed that confession before she died," was the remark made by Alice.

"My dear young lady, she came especially to confess, so as to save her son. She would not have died until she did confess."

"And if she had not suffered from that incurable disease, I doubt if she would have committed suicide," said Miss Plantagenet.

"Oh, I think so," said Durham, reflectively. "After all, her confession meant hanging to her. She wished to escape the gallows."

"I am glad Bernard did," said Miss Berengaria, emphatically; "even at the risk of all that scandal."

"It couldn't be kept out of the papers," said Dur-

ham, with a shrug. "After all, Bernard's character had to be fully cleansed. It was therefore necessary to tell the whole of Beryl's plot, to produce Michael as an example of what Nature can do in the way of resemblances, and to supplement the whole with Mrs. Gilroy's confession."

"And a nice trouble there was over it," said the old lady, annoyed. "I believe Bernard had a man calling on him who wished to write a play about the affair—a new kind of 'Corsican Brothers.'"

"Or a new 'Comedy of Errors,'" said Alice, smiling. "Well, the public learned everything and were sorry for Bernard. They cheered him when he left the court."

"And would have been quite as ready to hiss him had things turned out otherwise," snapped Miss Berengaria. "The man who should have suffered was that wretch Beryl."

"We couldn't catch him," said Durham. "Victoria reached him on that very night, and he cleared without loss of time. Of course, he was afraid of being accused of the crime, although he knew he was innocent, but, besides that, there was the conspiracy to get the estate by means of the false will. By the way, did Mrs. Moon say what had become of Victoria?"

Miss Berengaria nodded. "Victoria is down in Devonshire with an aunt, and is being kept hard at work to take the bad out of her. I understand she still believes in Jerry and will marry him when he comes out of the reformatory. He will then be of a marriageable age, the brat! But, regarding Beryl, what became of him?"

"I never could find out," confessed Durham.

"Then I can tell you, Durham. Michael saw him in New York."

"Where?"

"In some low slum, very ragged and poor. He didn't see Michael, or he might have troubled him. He has taken to drink, I believe—Beryl I mean—so some day he will die, and a nice fate awaits him where he will go," said Miss Berengaria, grimly.

Durham rose and removed his straw hat. "Well," said he, looking down on the two ladies, "the whole case is over and ended. I don't see why we should revive such very unpleasant memories. The past is past, so let it rest. Bernard has the title and the money and——"

"Here's Lucy," said Alice, rising. "Dear girl, how sweet she looks!"

It was indeed Lucy tripping across the lawn in the lightest of summer frocks. She looked charming, and greeted Alice with a kiss. "I am so anxious," she whispered. "The train will be in soon."

"You are anxious to see Conniston?" said Miss Berengaria.

"Yes. And I am also anxious to hand the Hall over to Bernard. I have had a lot of trouble looking after it. Haven't I, Mr. Durham?"

Durham bowed. "You have been an admirable Lady of the Manor," he said. "But soon you will be Lady Conniston."

"And Alice will be Lady of the Manor," laughed Lucy. "Oh, by the way, Mr. Durham, I forgot to tell you that Signor Tolomeo called at the Hall yesterday. He thought Bernard was back, and came to thank him for his allowing him an income."

"I thought he had gone back to Italy," said Durham.

"He is going next week, and talks of marriage."

"I don't envy his wife," said Miss Berengaria, rising. "Girls, come into the house to see that everything is prepared for our heroes."

The girls laughed and tripped away. Durham left the garden and drove to the station to fetch back Conniston and Bernard. They did not come by that train, however, much to the disappointment of those at the Bower. It was seven before they arrived, and then the three ladies came out to meet them on the lawn.

"Dear Alice," said Bernard, who had his arm in a sling, but otherwise looked what Conniston called "fit!" "how glad I am to see you!"

"And you, Lucy," said Conniston, taking his sweetheart in his arms.

"Really," cried Miss Berengaria, while Durham stood by laughing, "it is most perplexing to assist at the meeting of a quartette of lovers. Gore, how are you? Conniston, your fever has pulled you down. I hope you have both sown your wild oats and have come back to settle for good."

"With the most charming of wives," said Dick, bowing. "We have."

Miss Berengaria took Durham's arm. "I must look out a wife for you, sir," she said, leading him to the house. "Come away and let the turtle-doves coo alone. I expect dinner will be late."

And dinner was late. Conniston, with Lucy on his arm, strolled away in the twilight, but Bernard and Alice remained under the elm. When it grew quite

dusk a red light was seen shining from the window in the drawing-room. Gore pointed it out.

"That is the signal Lucy used to set in the window at the Hall to show that all was well," he said, putting his unwounded arm round the girl, "and now it stands as a sign that there is a happy future for you and your dearest."

"A red light is a danger signal," said Alice, laughing.

"This is the exception that proves the rule," said Gore. "It once led me into trouble, but now it has led upon me with my arms around you. Thank Heaven for that, after all our trouble, we are at last in safe waters. There's the gong for dinner."

Alice laughed. "A prosaic ending to a romantic speech," she said.

THE END

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